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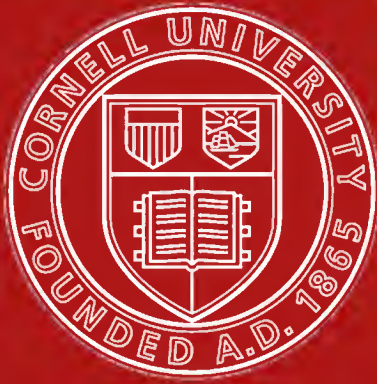
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Louise Renée de K roualle









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Duchess of Portsmouth.*

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# Louise Renée de Kéroualle

## (Duchess of Portsmouth)

By  
Mrs. Colquhoun Grant

Author of "French Noblesse of the Eighteenth Century," "Mother of Czars," "Queen and Cardinal," "Quaker and Courtier"

With Photogravure Portrait and other Illustrations



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## PREFACE

THIS story of Louise Renée de Penancoët, Dame de Kéroualle, who became so notorious in England under the title of Duchess of Portsmouth, has been gathered from many sources in Brittany, her natal land. Although a stigma has been for ever attached to her name on account of her intimate relations with Charles II. of England, her life was not a depraved or evil one. Her conduct was but in accordance with some of the strange morals of those times. She was a woman of immense capacity while of a tender and affectionate heart, and by her diplomatic relations with Louis XIV. she altered the whole face of Europe and its then existing conditions.

She belonged to one of the oldest families in Brittany, and both she and her sister founded noble families in England, but during her stay in that country she earned great unpopularity.

Her name was execrated by the people during the reign of Charles II. as they attributed every wrong act on the part of their sovereign to the evil influence of his French mistress. In her own country she was loaded with wealth and honours, rewards for what were considered good and well-merited deeds.

The books I consulted were some of the old French memoirs, those of Saint-Simon, St. Evremond; the *Œuil-de-Bœuf*, by Touchard-Lafosse; Sir John Reresby's *Memoirs*; Forneron's *Life of the Duchess of Portsmouth*, and other historical accounts of the reign of Charles II. My description of Brittany is drawn from well-known authors, *La Bretagne Ancienne et Moderne*, by Pitre Chevalier, and the able writings of Emil Souvestre.

## PREFACE

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Few personal records unfortunately remain of the beautiful woman, the subject of this memoir, but such as they are, I offer them to the reader as with the strange vicissitudes of her sister and herself, they may prove of some interest to the lover of old-world histories.

C. G.

1909

GENEALOGICAL TABLE.



\* This name is spelt differently in each generation. In England, Kérroualle has been rendered Quérrouaille.  
It is so spelt in Burke's Peerage. The Q and K are used indiscriminately in Brittany.







CHEST BELONGING TO LOUISE DE KÉROUALLE

*Now in the possession of the Earl of Ranfurly at Northland House, Dungannon, Ireland*

## INTRODUCTION

AN old chest lies before me as I write.

The woodwork of marquetrie in tints of amber and gold is inlaid with the careful work of the craftsman of former days, who finished his task with minutest care, very different to the reproductions of these modern times.<sup>1</sup>

It is raised on a little stand of the same fine work, and has two deep drawers for the better holding of the treasures consigned to its safe keeping.

As I lift the heavy lid, and look into the depth of the blue silk lining, and at the filmy pieces of lace within, imagination brings out

<sup>1</sup> Marquetrie work was an industry in Brittany as early as the reign of Louis XIII. It is no longer made there.

of the shadowy past the vision of the hands that touched those delicate pieces of personal adornment, and that turned the key in the elaborate and ornate lock which secured the valuable contents.

If, as is said, hands portray the characteristics of their owner, how seductive and delicate, and yet how competent and full of purpose those hands must have been, for it was a *maîtresse femme*, a subtly fair and frail beauty, to whom this chest belonged, one who was sought after and flattered in the circle in which she moved, and who was beloved of a king.

Could this ancient relic only speak, what tales it could tell of the many ambitions that swayed its lovely owner, of royal dalliance, unscrupulous greed and unholy friendships.

And yet there is a touch of natural human affection and relationship connected with this chest which seems to lift it up above the

corrupt surroundings from which it was removed to be carried down to this twentieth century, for it was a gift to a niece, an only sister's child, one who formed a link with home for this great Court lady, who, from the giddy height of her brilliant position, the costly price of her fair fame, still clung to those who had formed part of her home-life in distant Brittany from which their race has sprung.

Fate had brought the sisters to England, a foreign land to them, the one to become the wife of an English nobleman, the other to be the guilty but adored inmate of a palace, and to reign as queen over the heart of a monarch.

Yet, in spite of royal smiles and titles and riches lavished on her, this erring woman never quite lost the natural affections, and among others, her love for the little niece born and reared in a stately English home.

Long centuries have passed since those sisters



lived and died, and their heads been laid low in the dust. The very name they bore has gone down to posterity as a stigma, and the chest remains as a perpetual reminder to those who came after them of the dishonour which, in the seventeenth century, was looked upon as a light from the Crown, a privilege rather than a treachery and a disgrace.

# BRITTANY TO WHITEHALL

## CHAPTER I

### CHATEAU DE KÉROUALLE

IN the middle of the seventeenth century there stood a chateau near the village of Guiler about six miles from the town of Brest. It belonged to Guillaume de Penancoët, Seigneur de Kéroualle, commonly called the Comte de Kéroualle, and the chateau also was so named.<sup>1</sup> The house of Penancoët, which bore on its arms “*fasce de six pieces d’argent et d’azur, alias a la bordure chargée de six annelets en*

<sup>1</sup> This name is generally rendered Quèrouailles in English—the Q or the K being in use in Brittany for the same names.

In France, however, it is usually spelt as above, Kéroualle, but it is also rendered Kéroël, Kéronal, Kérouasle, Kéronazle. In the latter spelling the “s” or the “z” are not sounded.

## 18 FAMILY OF DE KÉROUALLE

orbe," had as its device "A bep pen lealdest"—"Loyauté partout," and was of very ancient chevalric extraction and dated from eleven generations prior to 1669. It belonged to the Bishopric of Lèon, whence sprang the most noble families of the province.

On the occasion of the marriage, 10th May, 1330, of Jeanne de Penancoët, Dame de Kérouzale, with François de Penhoët, the two families were merged in one, and by the contract then made he was obliged to take for himself and his children the name of Penancoët, and bear their arms, and his descendants continued to be known by that name.<sup>1</sup> Descending from a line of princely origin, the family was reputed to be one of the most ancient in the country, their name being derived from the ancient Barons and Viscounts of Lèon.<sup>2</sup>

Guillaume de Penancoët, Comte de Kéroualle, had served in the army in his youth. He was at the siege of Hesden in 1639 and

<sup>1</sup> It is an heraldic error made by some writers in calling Mlle. de Kéroualle, Louise Penhoët.

<sup>2</sup> It was said of this family: "Antiquité de Penhoët, Valliance de Chastel, Chevalerie de Kergoumadech".—Guy le Borgue.

## WAR SERVICE OF THE COMTE 19

at the siege of Arras in 1640, where he was severely wounded; and he was also at Aire and Bapaume in 1641.<sup>1</sup> He had been chosen standard-bearer of the company of men-at-arms of Cardinal Richelieu, and was afterwards made commandant of the “*Arrière-Ban*” or Convocation of Nobles in the Bishopric of Lèon. He was also on the Staff of the Duc de Chaulnes, Governor of Brittany. He married in 1645 Marie de Plœuc, daughter of Sebastien de Plœuc, Marquis de Tymeur, and of Marie de Rieux his wife. She was thus connected with some of the noblest families of Brittany, and was besides a great beauty.

They took up their abode in the Chateau de Kéroualle, but there is no record of the birth of their three children at Guiler, the records having been unfortunately all destroyed there prior to 1725. It is more probable that the children were born at Brest, it being the habit for noble ladies to repair to the nearest town at the time of their confinements. It does not appear that the Comte de Kéroualle was a rich man, although his land extended to Brest on

<sup>1</sup> All these places are in Pas de Calais.

## 20 CHILDREN OF DE KÉROUALLE

the one side and in the rich country beyond Guiler on the other. Brest was already a maritime town of some importance, but rumours were rife that the State meant to claim some of the low-lying lands of Recouverance to enlarge the port and increase the defences.<sup>1</sup> At any rate, it was at the chateau that the three children spent their childhood.

The eldest was a son, Sebastien de Penancoët, Seigneur de Kéroualle; then followed two daughters, Louise Renée de Penancoët, also Dame de Kéroualle, and little Henriette Mauricette de Penancoët de Kéroualle—but she never possessed any seigneurial rights.

The old home exists to this day, although

<sup>1</sup> Tradition asserts that the old city belonged to King Bristicus—hence its name—whose duty it was every Saturday to throw some person into the sea to be devoured by a cruel dragon, so as to ensure the safety of the rest, till Riok, the little son of the Seigneur d'Elorn, who had been brought up in the Christian Faith, by his innocence and the marvellous power of Heaven, was able, by giving the sign of the Cross, to approach the dragon and lead him peacefully into the town of Brest, to the immense relief of the inhabitants. Riok was of course eventually canonised.

the family of the De Kéroualles is extinct. The chateau is doubtless altered, having been restored probably in the early part of last century, but it still gives a very good idea of what it must have been like over two hundred years ago.

The territory of the Comte, as has been said before, stretched six or seven miles to the sea, and was mostly forest land. It was in parts a hilly country with extended views, the chief characteristics of the roads at the present day being the oak hedges growing on the high banks of the deep lanes, and which are evidently the outcome of forest trees.

The road from Brest leads there through what is now the modern suburb of Recouvrance.<sup>1</sup>

Just before reaching the village of Guiler a turn in the road brings the traveller suddenly on a ruined gateway leading into the woods, the stone pillars of which are now alone standing. A grass-grown drive leads through them under an avenue of trees into what looks like a neglected park, now the

<sup>1</sup> Now the sailors' quarter of the town.



## 22 DESCRIPTION OF CHATEAU

property of the Baronne de Didelot, who resides in a modern villa in one corner of the property.<sup>1</sup>

Following one of the many shady avenues, all leading up from different directions to the central point where the chateau stands, an open space is reached.

The house, a long low one, is an imposing-looking building, consisting of two floors with high roof and dormer windows.<sup>2</sup> The central doorway is evidently old, but the framework of the windows is the work of last century. The rooms on the ground floor have been whitewashed; some are papered; there are

<sup>1</sup> The history of the chateau through the centuries is unknown. It belonged at the end of the eighteenth century to Madame Hersent, a celebrated painter, and mother of Locadia de Penquer, author of *Vallèda*. This latter was born there in 1827 and married the Mayor of Brest. The late Baron de Didelot, who was a distinguished admiral, and whose family belonged to that part of the country, bought the property, and left it to his widow.

<sup>2</sup> The high roof with dormer windows was brought into use in France under Louis XIV. The same shape as is reproduced to-day on modern French houses, only that slates are used instead of tiles.



CHÂTEAU DE KÉROUALLE, GUILERS, FINISTERRE, FRANCE



signs of recent habitation, and all are modernised. Those on the first floor are untouched; boarded shutters standing closed preserve them. Here and there on ceilings and wainscot are traces of frescoes added in 1690. The back of the house has modern doors and windows, and looks out on a large, neglected wilderness of a garden. Two massive towers of the fifteenth century flank the house at the back and have been untouched. Here and there a Tudor window has also been left.

The courtyard in front of the house is railed off. There are the pillars of the ancient central gate still standing, and it is further embellished by two pavilions, or what we call wings, not however attached to the main building though standing within the enclosure.

These pavilions, like the rest of the chateau, have been restored. There is a chapel in one of them, and both are ornamented with stone balustrades with grass-grown steps, pointing to the Renaissance period.

In the courtyard is a well of much the same date, the cover of which is supported

on four slender columns, with ivy clinging round the base.

On the wall of the chapel are some effaced arms on a stone shield.

An air of tranquil grandeur pervades this uninhabited and deserted house, standing solitary and alone among the woods, in this remote corner of Brittany, a mere memory now of far-away days.

In front of this old habitation of the Middle Ages in this prosaic twentieth century, we gaze with interest and curiosity at what was once the home of Louise de K  roualle.

The surroundings are probably but little altered since she lived there ; it was the spot where her childhood's days were passed, and merry laughter must have re-echoed round those walls as the little children of the Comte de K  roualle pursued their sports near the ancestral abode.

There, too, she grew into lovely maidenhood, and dreamed away the happy hours with all the fancies and pleasures of youth.

Could we but possess a magic crystal so

as to conjure up, from that distant past, the scenes that must have taken place in that old Breton chateau, the once famous beauty would live again for us, and we should better understand what life meant to the men and women of those days.

The education that formed her character, and the motives that swayed her after-life, might be read more clearly in the fierce light of the present day if we knew more of the intimate facts of her daily existence. But history is silent on those points, and so her characters, like puppets on a stage, are judged by modern readers who only dimly perceive, and cannot understand, and are thus often misled.



## CHAPTER II

### BRITTANY

THE province of Brittany, the Armorica of the ancients, has always kept itself apart from the rest of France, and this very isolation is what has endeared it to its inhabitants. Historically and geographically this country has held its own against foreign foes and the overwhelming ocean, which, encroaching along other coasts, never could overcome its barriers, defended as they are by their rugged headlands. Of the ancient conquerors Cæsar and Charlemagne alone enthralled Brittany. She paid no lasting tribute to the rulers of the world. Even the English, masters as they were of France, though decimating these western parts for years, fighting their battles on her hills and in her valleys till the land ran red with blood, never obtained possession, and history repeated itself in the days of the great Napoleon, when

the “Chouans” fought “les bleus,” as they called the French regulars, for the liberty of their fatherland. The Breton still remains a Breton. Their characteristics are clear and defined. The Celt is strong in the race and brought with it a touch of the Orient to their fog-laden coasts. There is a strain of melancholy in their nature, perhaps the outcome of their Druidical ancestors, with their human sacrifices and cruel superstitions, these may have left a taint, which has not been without influence on the race. Signs of it still hover over the country where quaint ceremonies and weird omens and customs still prevail. True, they were among the earliest to receive the good seed sown by the saints and bishops of Rome, but the temples to the unknown gods, the Cromlechs, the Menhirs and the Dolmens, the remains of which still strew the land from east to west, continued to be the Holy of Holies to the simple country men. The oaks had been the sacred trees of the Druids, the mistletoe growing on its branches their most precious treasure, and such it long remained in the eyes of the people.

The sea had no terror for the Breton. Their sons were a race of hardy mariners, who dreaded neither the pitiless rock nor the foaming ocean waves, which yearly claimed its hundreds, as it does still. Round the rugged coast the sea, with all its splendours and all its harmonies, and yet its terrific force and the uproar of its waves, would fill hearts with dread to whom it was not such a matter of daily occurrence as it is to the hardy inhabitants of Finisterre. Its “Baie des Trépassés,” ghastly name of “Bay of Death,” would fill the more peaceful dwellers on land with horror, for there the bodies of the shipwrecked are often tossed to and fro among the seaweed, and in those seething waters are denied all possibility of sepulture.

On All Souls’ Day it is said that plaintive moans are heard in the “Baie des Trépassés”. The spirits of drowned mariners, and other victims of the sea, are to be seen floating on the crests of the waves like white foam, and there every year they meet those they loved on earth and from whom they were separated by a cruel death. Each crested wave contains

a soul, and it is when they meet that a long, low wail is heard, and as they are once more torn asunder, and each carried on its way, the moans increase in agony, and the traveller passing that way crosses himself and repeats the prayers for the dead.<sup>1</sup>

Finisterre (the ancient Cornouaille and Pays de Léon) is typical of the whole of Brittany, with the fertility of its valleys and the aridness of its plains. The beauty and ruggedness at every step form strong contrasts, and the same variety repeats itself in its monuments, its types and its customs. The northern part is the Arabia Petrea of Brittany, the south is Arcadia. In the former are bare dusty roads, open heather land where cattle and sheep graze, scattered far and wide, and on meagre pasturage. The chain of hills stands up bleak against the horizon without trees. The skies are often grey with a chill damp in winter and a dry heat in summer. It is a desert of gorse and thorny plants, and amid these arid scenes lives a population, sombre, hard and silent.

<sup>1</sup> Emil Souvestre.

On the other hand, the southern portion has sunny landscapes such as Virgil would have sung; green orchards with fruit-laden trees; meadows of rich emerald verdure, starred with flowers. Streams in the valleys watered this country where old manor houses were to be seen among groves of oak, and church spires rose above the thick copses.

Oak-trees abound, and though not attaining to a great size as in England, are a distinct feature of that part of Brittany. The sea surrounding the coast with its grand beauty, and the rich woodlands in the centre, makes it seem as if this fertile land had been blessed by reason of its calvarys and belfrys.<sup>1</sup>

When the first fervours of the religious age had passed, and fear of the end of the world been forgotten, and when the after-effects of the Crusades had subsided, then began the pious mysticism of the Middle Ages. In Brittany as in France it was the height of Gothic Art. Churches of architectural beauty began to rise in every bishopric. Each gargoye representing a monstrosity

<sup>1</sup> Emil Souvestre.

was intended to teach the eternal battle with the power of darkness ; each carved Christian symbol that of the power of light. The masons and stone-carvers who raised these mighty edifices, with their forests of pillars and flying buttresses of stone lace-work, never left any memory of themselves as individuals. No name was ever graven to carry down their individuality to posterity ; they sought no reward or fame of men. Love of their Church was ever present, and a deep religious spirit.

It is said of the Breton to this day that they have five virtues and three vices :—

Love of their country ; Submission before God ; Loyalty towards men ; Perseverance ; Worship of the past.

It is sad to put against these fine qualities the national vices of Avarice, Drunkenness and Want of Consideration towards women.

Such was the land, its characteristics and its people, from which the race of the De Kéroualles had sprung, and which was not without influence on their minds and lives.

In the seventeenth century, when means of

communication were difficult and often rendered impossible, only some few of the nobles had facilities for reaching the capital. In far-off provinces like that of Brittany impoverished seigneurs remained in their country homes, although they did their best to send their sons and daughters into the gay world of the Court.

Not that they lived without luxury in these remote regions, and they held their heads very high, and scorned communication with the middle classes.

In the days of the Dukes of Brittany we read of their dresses of gold and silver tissue. Rare wines were on their tables, and rich plate. One pictures the lives in the feudal times as having been devoid of all the elegance to which moderns are accustomed, but when the castle of the early barons had been replaced by the beautiful structures which, either in ruins or partially restored, are the admiration of the present day, the dwellings of the nobles became stately mansions suited to their position and wealth. Stone had replaced the wooden houses; the mud forts

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which surrounded them gave way to massive walls and magnificent gateways.

Their tables were laid with plate, though fine damask was unknown, and the habit of taking warm baths, and pouring water over their hands after meals, which had come down from the days of the Roman conquerors, was prevalent. Baths were as much a necessity then as with us, and though they were roughly made tubs, they had aromatic preparations which were placed in the hot water, and baths were even taken after dinner, which sounds imprudent when one thinks of the mighty feasts of ancient days.<sup>1</sup>

“Ce n'était que sous la Monarchie absolue, l'époque où la France devint sale,” writes Chateaubriand, and it certainly was very true. The habits and manners of the time of Louis XIV. had by no means improved, and many of the chateaux and manors were already in a state of decay, and the lives of the nobles much more restricted. It was the heavy and vexatious taxation under Louis XIV. which

<sup>1</sup> *La Chevalerie*, Leon Gautier.

### 34 DECADENCE OF THE NOBLES

brought the old families down so low as well as crushed and ground down the peasantry.

It was not all the fault of the former that they did not consider the welfare and well-being of their inferiors. It had not been the habit in time past, when the knights rode out of their castles attended by their retinue, monarchs of all they surveyed, then, their vassals gladly did them homage and service. Now, high and low suffered under the tyranny of a rapacious government, both regretting the good old days, and the further from the capital and the Court the less redress could be obtained.

## CHAPTER III

### ANCESTRY

THE history of Brittany stands apart from the history of France, and the nobles who owned the soil were tenacious of their rights and proud of their pedigrees.

The Penancoëts descended from a long line of fighting ancestors who must have won their spurs in the wars with England. Doubtless their descendants took arms, like the rest of the flower of the Breton nobles, under the famous Bertrand du Guesclin, son of a poor gentleman in Lower Brittany, who became Charles V.'s most famous general. He ably defended the wall-encircled town of Dinan against the Duke of Lancaster. The siege was long and fierce, and the spirits of the inhabitants began at last to droop, when the beautiful Tiphaine Ragueneau, whose mother was the heiress De la Belliere, predicted from the market-place to all who would listen to

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her that the beleaguered army would yet be successful. In that dark hour many shook their heads, and Du Guesclin openly laughed at her, but in the day of his success he remembered the lovely prophetess, and she eventually became his wife. Her house on the rock of Mont St. Michel is shown to this day.

The Du Rieux were among the Breton conqueror's warriors—Du Guesclin's own sister had married one of that name ; and it was one of their descendants, Marechal de Rieux, who in 1436 drove the English out of the Ile de France. In 1440, when Jean V., then Duke of Brittany, wished to assure himself of the fidelity of his seigneurs, he caused them all to take the oath. The Comtesse de Kéroualle was connected with this family, which was of ancient and famous lineage.

The Sieurs de Penhoët figure in the records of Rennes from 1384 to 1397, and again in 1451 to 1455. One of the race, Jean de Penhoët was Governor of Morlaix in 1402, and he destroyed the English fleet there in 1403. He was made admiral for his services, and received from Duke Jean V. for himself and

his successors, the right to eat at the Duke's table when it pleased him to do so, and when he did not care to dine there he could have his dinner and supper sent from the royal kitchens, with the very best wines from the ducal cellar. The elder branch of the family became merged in that of the De Rohans in 1475; another branch of the Kéroualles in that of Troësquer in the sixteenth century, and the branch of Keroual in that of Lemousimere in 1492. The device of the Penhoëts was "Red co," "Il faut".<sup>1</sup>

In the roll-call of nobles of Lèon we find the name of Penancoët, and again it figures in the list of those of Treguiers.<sup>2</sup>

In 1465, in the reign of François II., Duke of Brittany, occurred a war called "Pour le Bien Public," and among the nobles who served was a De Pleuc and a Penhoët. The Marechal de Rieux took a leading part in this war, and was made Guardian to Duchess

<sup>1</sup> Extracts from *L'Ouest aux Croisades*, by H. de Fourmont, Conservateur-adjoint de la Bibliothèque publique de Nantes. From vol. ii., pages 44 and 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Actes de Bretagne*, Col. ii., 1316-1732, D. Morice,

Anne by her father. At his death in 1488 Anne was left in possession of his estates, and was for a time supported by Henry VII. of England, who lent his aid to preserve the independence of Brittany, as he feared the further aggrandisement of the French monarchy. But her marriage with Charles, King of France, finally incorporated Brittany with the French Empire, and the constant danger of invasion from England ceased to menace them; and when the English forces in Normandy were a peril on their borders, a number of nobles, among whom was a Penhoët, with 8,000 men, fell like a torrent on the English and completely routed them. These, therefore, were some of the records of brave deeds and famous ancestors cherished and remembered in the Chateau de Kéroualle.

Love of country and pride in a noble race must have been early instilled into the hearts of these children of the Comte de Kéroualle, and love of country remained the keynote of Louise's character in after-life.

She loved authority and wealth too, and had many ambitions. She was not without

these weaknesses in her mature life, but to serve France when it became in her power to do so was the motive that mainly swayed her actions when after-events enabled her to exercise her talents.

Thus out of the influences of the home life in that far-away chateau in Brittany, the girl born and reared among them grew to womanhood, and by a combination of circumstances was led step by step into a very different region of people and things, and from being an insignificant member of society, the centre possibly of her own family circle, but nothing more, she became a powerful factor in the world of her day.

## CHAPTER IV

### FIRST INTRODUCTION AT COURT

THERE is no really authentic record as to how the girlhood of Louise de K roualle was passed.

It was said that she early showed the proclivities that distinguished her after-years, and was inclined to encourage the adorers who soon flocked around her. The Comte de K roualle had probably no "dot" to bestow on his daughter, at least such a one as would have tended to promote a marriage that he would have considered suitable. His lands were decreasing in value, and his family much impoverished. He must, however, have thought it unwise to let a girl of Louise's temperament lead the dull monotonous existence which was the fate of the inmates of remote chateaux in the province. There was always the fear that from sheer



ennui she would take up some lowly lover, and the fame of her beauty had spread round the country side.

It is said that her father took her himself to an adjacent town, possibly the cathedral city of Quimper, where he lodged her with an excellent lady, with whom he was acquainted, and in whose motherly care he left her. There she threw around that bourgeois family the mantle of her fascinations till one and all fell victims to her charms, and she could do pretty much as she liked with them all. Rumours of her gay doings and the many lovers who flocked around her reached the ears of the Count. This was not at all what he intended, and he had to think of some better means of ensuring the safety of his wayward child. But this statement is taken from a very scandalous book, published towards the end of the seventeenth century, and no reliance can be placed on it.<sup>1</sup> In this pamphlet all sorts of statements were

<sup>1</sup> *Secret History of the Duchess of Portsmouth*, edited in French and English in 1690 and 1734; also again by Jacques Lacombe in Paris in 1805,

made. The Comte de Kéroualle was said to have been a retired wool merchant, and another assertion was that he was a herdsman. Everything that could possibly throw insult and indignity on the family of Louise de Kéroualle was here set forth, regardless of exactitude, although mixed with some amount of truth. It is stated that her father sent her to Paris.

This is highly probable, and far more likely than that he should have sent her to live with strangers in the provinces, which was against all the habits and customs of his class. His brother's widow lived in Paris, also a Comtesse de Kéroualle, and she doubtless gladly welcomed the society of her niece. Her husband, during his lifetime, had rendered valuable services to the Duc de Beaufort, and he had never ceased to repay this kindness to the widow in every possible way.

François de Vendôme Duc de Beaufort was a grandson of Henri IV., so he held a high position at Court. He was a restless warrior no longer young, and ever seeking service. He had fought in Africa against the pirates of

Algiers and Tunis, who interfered greatly with the commerce between France and the Levant. Much was said of his bravery and he was made Admiral of France. In Paris he was immensely popular with the people, and during the Fronde he was familiarly called “Le roi des Halles”.<sup>1</sup>

The story goes that he met the widow Mme. de Kéroualle walking with her niece in the gardens of the Tuileries. The Duc, no mean judge of women, was struck at once with the extreme beauty of the girl, and above all the effect her appearance produced on the passers-by. It was further added that he fell in love with her and that Louise returned his passion, and that between them they managed to escape the surveillance of her chaperon and had many stolen interviews. At that time the Venetians were besieged in Candia by the Turks, and De Beaufort asked permission of the King, Louis XIV., to take a force to their rescue. It was affirmed that he was accom-

<sup>1</sup> It was his easy manners and coarse language that delighted the rough populace and earned him his sobriquet, —St. Evremond,

panied on the expedition by a young page, who was none other than Louise in disguise.

But all these stories were invented in after years, when she had become the notorious beauty and stood on an exalted pedestal, and was assailed by the darts of her enemies. The real facts were probably these. Her brother Sebastien, a handsome youth, who greatly resembled his sister, had procured, doubtless through her influence, a place about the Duke, and it was he who accompanied him on the campaign. He was made captain of the flagship, such appointments to young and inexperienced men being often given as marks of favour. Sebastien was a Breton, and an inhabitant of Finisterre, and therefore probably a born sailor, and accustomed to the sea. He won his laurels at the siege of Candia, from which the Duke never returned, being killed by the explosion of a mine in the hour of success.

No one could have credited that Louise, in the guise of a page, encountered thrilling adventures all through this campaign, which lasted from the 5th of June till the 10th of

October, 1669, as during this period she was before the whole Court in her capacity of maid-of-honour to Henrietta, Princess of England and Duchess of Orleans, commonly known as *Madame*.

Whoever compiled the *Secret History* knew just sufficient details about the family to give some appearance of truth to this imaginary and libellous chronicle. Young Sebastien who, had he lived, might have been a protection and help to his sister, died shortly after his return to France, being wounded by a pistol in some brawl.<sup>1</sup>

No doubt Louise's appointment at Court had been brought about by the influence of the Duc de Beaufort. It must have been considered a great privilege to belong to the household of such a royal lady as *Madame* of Orleans. Never was there a princess so fascinating and so ready to please all who approached her. The Abbé de Choisy has left a charming picture of this accomplished and amiable woman :—

“You felt interested in her, you loved her,

<sup>1</sup> This occurred in Provence in the winter of 1669.

without being able to help yourself. Her eyes were black and brilliant, full of the fire which kindles a prompt response in other hearts. When you met her for the first time her eyes sought your own, as if she had no other desire in the world but how best to please you. She had all the wit necessary to make a woman charming, and what is more, all the talent necessary for conducting important affairs had this been required of her. But at the Court of our young King in those days pleasure was the order of the day, and to be charming was enough."

Charles II. adored his sister. Many of their letters have been preserved, both during his exile and after the Restoration. He used to call her "*chère Minette*" and "*my deare deare sister*".

"Do not treat me with so much ceremony, or address me with so many Majesties," he says in one of these letters, "as between you and me, there should be nothing but affection," and again signs himself "*intierly yours*," and "*truely and passionately devoted*".

The history of this unfortunate princess,

who in spite of her virtues and attractions received but scant affection or even justice at the hands of her husband, the ill-conditioned Philippe of Orleans, is too well known to need further repetition, but certainly to be received into her household was a mark of distinction of which any girl would have been proud, and which would not have been granted save to a scion of a noble family and one personally recommended at Court.

Naturally the new maid-of-honour, who bore the title of *La Belle Bretonne*, received much attention. Among the men of fashion who paid court to Mlle. de Kéroualle was the Comte de Sault, son of the Duc de Lesdiguières. He had been the victor in a celebrated tournament held under the windows of the Tuileries in 1662,<sup>1</sup> and since then had been a person of importance in the Court circle.

The attentions of this nobleman were not fortunate for the reputation of Mlle. de Kéroualle. He was a man who was for ever

<sup>1</sup> The name is recorded in that of the Place du Carrousel, where the jousts were held, carrousel being another name for a tournament.

mixed in intrigues, and was very lax where women were concerned.

This flirtation or love passage, whatever it may have been, was never forgotten. It was brought up against her in after years, and even in England the story followed her, and was made use of with many embellishments by her rivals and enemies. Madame de Sévigné, Louvois, and Saint-Simon all record this intimacy.<sup>1</sup> But after all his was the only name mentioned in connection with Louise at that period, and a beautiful maid-of-honour of the Court of Louis XIV., even when most careful of her reputation, must have been pursued by many lovers, so that if this was the only scandal attached to her name in her early girlhood in Paris, her record was not such a very black one after all; except for those gossip-mongers, the authors of brilliant memoirs and delightful letters, full of scandals

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Simon affirms that her parents intended Louise to be mistress of Louis XIV., so obtained for her a place in the household of *Madame*. Unfortunately he gave the preference to Mlle. de La Valière. But as Mlle. de Kéroualle was amiable and clever, she had much success at Court (*Memoirs of Saint-Simon*, vol. iv.).



of every one in high places, there is no certain testimony that Louise's conduct was open to real censure.

However, De Sault's attentions were sufficiently damaging to her reputation to be long remembered, and when she had become a great lady in England, her rivals gladly recalled the incident when desirous to mortify her, as will be seen later on.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Aspersions cast on Louise de Kéroualle by the Marchioness of Worcester" (*Affaires Étrangères*, vol. v., 114, 1674).

## CHAPTER V

### SCHEMES OF LOUIS XIV

IN one of the numerous “Chroniques Scandaleuses” that were written at that period, the remark is made that it was not for nothing that noble families in the provinces sent their girls to Court, so that they might quickly form their manners and ensure success,<sup>1</sup> but in this instance it was not because she attracted the Sultan of the French seraglio that Louis XIV. looked upon Louise de K  roualle with a favourable eye. The subtlety of her charms and her disposition for intrigue did not escape the *Grand Monarque*. Henrietta, *Madame of Orleans*, was in a position to help him considerably in the schemes he was now forming. His sister-in-law was clever and full of tact,

<sup>1</sup> *Chroniques de l'Œuil-de-Bœuf*, vol. ii., by Touchard-Lafosse, Compiled in 1829.

and he was very fond of her. It was often said that Louis regretted having refused in the first instance to marry her, which had been the wish of his mother, Anne of Austria, and on her part Henrietta had always admired and liked Louis far more than his brother Philippe d'Orleans. The French monarch could not have found a better ambassador, and here was a tool among her lovely bevy of girls ready to hand. His brilliant idea was to give the susceptible Charles a French mistress, and thus have a useful ally in closest intimacy with the English king. Till then Louis had found no woman likely to play the rôle to his satisfaction, but this young girl displayed such extraordinary capabilities, as well as possessing so much personal attraction, that he determined to make the attempt. Other nations were becoming uneasy at the aggrandisement of France, and sought to league together, so there was no time to lose. M. de Pomponne, his ambassador in Holland, informed Louis that England was in treaty with the Hague, and was about to join in a further alliance with that country and Spain,

By degrees political suggestions began to fuse to such a point that it was thought necessary to support Spain, in spite of its creed, against Louis XIV.

While the descendants of Philippe II. were languishing in the Escorial, the effete race drawing nearer and nearer to an end, all the Powers in Europe were watching as to who should step in when their final overthrow became a certainty.

Louis XIV. knew that the friendship of England was absolutely necessary, and that could only be reached through King Charles.

Before having recourse to petticoat influence to preserve the union, or at least neutrality with England, Louis had already employed various diplomatic methods. The nearness of that country to Flanders was a source of danger, and on the other hand, the successes of France in the provinces of the Netherlands, drawing away the commerce they considered their own, had raised the ire of the English people. The strong Protestant feelings naturally caused antagonism between them and a Roman Catholic king. That a

fierce opposition was to be expected Louis knew full well, and it was only through Charles that he could achieve success; but this was no easy task. Charles was an impossible man to deal with, his vacillations and his versatile nature were proverbial.

From his youth he had shown himself to be voluptuous. The easy temper and the good-humoured familiarities in which he indulged had acquired for him that popularity among his loving subjects which not all his future profligacy and misgovernment could wholly destroy. He was talkative, easily turned from any purpose, and indulgent towards all intrigue. The people loved to see him divested of the trappings of State, and conversing easily with those who attended him, or stopping at sight of some familiar countenance that encountered him in his walk. His royal dignity was but a cloak for careless self-indulgence and reckless prodigality. He was without prejudices and without principles, and though head of the Church of England without much religion.

## 54 AFTER THE COMMONWEALTH

Louis had had a good deal to say in Charles' marriage ; he had planned, in furtherance of his schemes, to bring about an alliance with the Portuguese heiress. The enmity of Portugal for Spain was not without merit in Louis' eyes, the latter being looked upon as a great source of danger to the interests of France ; but the uninteresting wife bestowed upon Charles, whatever may have been the merits of that unfortunate lady, was hardly likely to have any weight with him, surrounded as he was by meretricious beauties.

The King of France much preferred to see his cousin and rival lead a life of frivolous unconcern.

London, after the stern days of the Commonwealth, had awakened to life and gaiety once more. The Court of Whitehall, once the Restoration had taken place, became one of the most brilliant of Europe, and the result of the gallantry of the nobles, and the easy morals of the rich and powerful, was to spread such examples among all classes.

So much romance had surrounded the young King in his exile, that his courtiers

willingly continued to encourage all the glamour of chivalry and love-making. They had had enough of the puritan among them, and from every tavern issued sounds of dancing and singing.

Masquerades were the order of the day, and river parties the chief delight.

The King would be seen on summer evenings descending the steps of Whitehall to the water, glad to escape the hot and dusty roads, and after the fashion of Venice to take his relaxation in the royal barge on the cool flowing stream. All the Thames was crowded with boats, and the courtiers in gay cloaks of crimson and azure velvets, with rich trimmings of venetian lace, and flowing plumes from the graceful cavalier hats, followed in the wake of their sovereign.

The royal barge was crowded with the loveliest ladies of the Court, and Charles played on his guitar as he was rowed along, warbling love-songs to the latest favourite, while grave lords with their mandolins tried to follow his example.

The gay doings gave an impetus to trade

which began to flourish exceedingly, but the honest citizens objected strongly to the licentious habits of the palace.

Charles had lived so long in France, besides having inherited from his French mother a taste for that country, that many refugees from Paris had settled in London, and were ready enough to serve the interests of their country.

One of the most remarkable of these was Charles de St. Denis, Sieur de St. Evremond. He was born in 1613, was destined for the Bar, but after finishing his studies he took to the career of arms and served with his regiment for some years in the wars with Flanders. He was under the special protection of the Duc de Candale, but the Cardinal Mazarin having quarrelled with the Duke, and not daring to attack him openly, sought to mortify him through his protégé St. Evremond. He was accused of having made some unfortunate remarks at the Duke's dinner table and was sent to the Bastile. After three months he was set at liberty, but being always in fear of fresh arrest he determined to leave the country.



He repaired to England where he had many friends, and was under the protection of the King, and there for a time he made his home. The Dukes of Buckingham and Ormond, also the Earl of Arlington, were among his friends, so he had no real reason to deplore his disgrace or exile. His chief companion was M. d'Aubigny, uncle of the Duke of Richmond.<sup>1</sup>

Another Frenchman of note was the Chevalier de Grammont, who became celebrated by his marriage with the King's mistress, commonly called *La Belle Hamilton*.

Louis did not trust the ministers. The Duke of Buckingham, it was true, was on his side, but it was not so much from his political beliefs as it was from hatred for his rival the Earl of Arlington.

The latter supported the interests of Spain.

Both united in fearing the return to power of the Chancellor Clarendon. Each had his confidant or spy to work secretly for his interests.

That of Buckingham was a man named

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Memories of St. Evremond.*

## 58 FRENCH COLONY IN LONDON

Leyton, a city merchant, clever at his own trade, rich and rapacious, and ready for any combination that would advance the interests of trade. Arlington's friend and secretary was a man named Williamson, who was reserved, and apparently disinterested. Therefore he had less power in that corrupt age.

Louis was fully aware how these men were employed, and why. He wrote openly about them to his ambassador, and Leyton was bribed by 400 pistoles to come over to the Court of France. A little later he was offered and accepted a pension of 300 jacobus.<sup>1</sup>

But Louis did not trust him any more than the others. He preferred the French colony in London.

These men assisted the French alliance with all their might, and gave valuable information to the ambassador of Louis XIV. There were a considerable number of merchants also living in London who found that business was better there than in Paris. These Louis

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Colbert, 27th March, 1669, vol. 94.

utilised for his political schemes. They all worked silently, while Charles went on in the even tenor of his ways, gaily making promises he never kept.

One day he would be made to declare that he was ready to join France against the rest of Europe, the next he was equally willing to coalesce with Holland.

Louis now determined to take some active steps, but he was too astute to show his hand. For some time past it had been his intention to take the Queen to visit their new subjects. It was already three years since the French army, commanded by Turenne, had taken possession of the Flemish provinces; it was therefore proposed that *Madame* should accompany them, while the true object of the journey remained concealed.

A large and brilliant *cortège* therefore set off for Flanders. The King travelling in his magnificent glass coach in company with the Queen, *Madame*, and the ruling favourite, Mme. de Montespan, whose presence the luckless Marie Therèse was obliged to en-

dure, although at times this lady, who always carried out her own whims, insisted on travelling in her own carriage attended by four guards.

The state with which they moved accorded with the taste of the *Grand Monarque*, who liked on every occasion to gratify his people by a sight of his splendour. Royal furniture was even sent ahead to the towns where they intended to pass the night. A train of servants, hairdressers, perfume sellers, costumiers and musicians accompanied the Court. It was said there were 2,000 valets.

The smaller towns were roused to astonishment when they saw their streets suddenly bright with colour as they beheld the motley crew invading them, and it gave the burghers a glimpse of royal luxury in the midst of their provincial poverty. Even the King's cooks set up their ovens in the market-places, and delicious viands and appetising odours met their startled gaze and excited their olfactory nerves. Louis gave banquets at each halting-place to impress the con-

quered inhabitants of Flanders with his condescension, so that they might indeed call him by his proud title of “Louis the Magnificent”.

## CHAPTER VI

### ROYAL VISIT TO DUNKIRQUE

THE royal progress was continued to Dunkirque, and when the Court reached that port, it happened by a seeming chance that an English fleet was cruising in the Channel. What more natural than that the Duchesse d'Orleans should ask permission to take advantage of such an opportunity to pay her brother a short visit. The affair had the most spontaneous air possible.

All the difficulties had been smoothed away under the clever management of Henrietta, who willingly played into her brother-in-law's hands. Gentle and young as she was, she was equal to the work laid on her shoulders, and her intense love for her brother Charles rendered her more than willing to promote whatever she thought was to his advantage, and she felt certain that a firm

alliance with France was best of all for him. She was prepared to employ any means, good or evil, that would suit her purpose, but she desired to conduct the affair with as much secrecy as possible as regarded her real motives. She embarked with Louis' consent, taking with her her suite and five maids-of-honour, among whom was the new Breton beauty.

It hardly does to discuss the morality of this piece of diplomacy, or by whatever name one can call the proceeding, deliberately to take over a girl to England for such a purpose, nor is it certain that this part of the business was an act of premeditation as far as *Madame* was concerned. Louis XIV. had no scruples and had planned the whole game step by step. If Henrietta was aware of his intention she probably thought the plan was absurd and unlikely, and had much more serious matters to discuss with Charles. But in such Courts as Versailles and Whitehall, very little fine feeling existed among them, and it is hopeless to judge their conduct by our present-day standard. It must

also be remembered that *Madame* of Orleans, although a woman of infinite charm, cannot be altogether reckoned as an uninterested party. She would not have done anything to injure the brother she loved so dearly, but on the other hand she adored King Louis.

There are many historians who do not scruple to assert that she was his avowed mistress. In any case there was a deep attachment between them. She would have been unable to refuse Louis any request, or decline to do him a service, and this was after all a trifling matter.

What was the reputation of one girl, when weighed in the balance against the interests of the Church, the safest course for King Charles, and the aggrandisement of Louis. So *Madame* raised no objections. She was thirsting to reach England and put her plans into execution.

The weather being propitious the brilliant company embarked on the man-of-war, and soon the white cliffs of Dover greeted the delighted eyes of the English princess, returning to her native land—Charles and the Duke



of York being there to welcome their sister. The visit could be only a short one, so *Madame* lost no time in setting to work over negotiations, and she urged upon the King the wisdom of forming an alliance with France against the other Powers.

He listened to her arguments with attention, and she told the French ambassador after the first interview that she had almost brought Charles round to her views. Her tact and cleverness overcame all difficulties, added to which was the warm affection existing between the brother and sister.

But as Louis had foreseen there was a still more powerful factor at work. Where women were concerned the King of England always fell a ready victim. Louise de K  roualle, with her baby face and large melancholy eyes, caught his attention at once. It was a new face, quite different to the English beauties, and perhaps more pleasing to his foreign-loving eye.

It was the fashion to consider her lovely, though the portraits extant hardly give us that impression.

The oval of her countenance was framed by her magnificent hair, very dark brown, with rich red tints gleaming in her tresses, which waved and curled naturally. Her complexion was exquisite, like the bloom on a peach. In England it was usual to call her face childish and wanting in expression. It may have been the former from sheer youth and simplicity, it can hardly have been the latter, for the character she afterwards displayed must from the first have left some traces on her features, for she was clever; her worst enemies could not deny her that qualification.

Anyway, she attracted a good deal of attention, whether from her charms or the King's evident admiration it is hard to say. All agreed that she was sweet, gentle and obliging, attentive to her royal mistress, and very religious like all Bretons. Objection was taken by some to her neck being too thin; in reality her figure was already inclining if not to embonpoint, at least to the fulness and rich curves Charles loved, which speedily caught and captured that voluptuous monarch, and falling into the trap set for him by his

brother sovereign, the latter was soon to learn that his aim had not missed fire.

The King insisted on prolonging his sister's visit—perhaps the evenings spent in pleasant gallantries near the lovely stranger had something to do with it. He loaded *Madame* with presents and did not forget the ladies of her Court, and the jewels he bestowed on her were magnificent. It is said that he asked Henrietta for one of her own jewels as a parting souvenir, and that she bade her Breton maid-of-honour bring her casket, so that the King might choose what he liked, and that Charles, taking Louise's hand, said that this was the jewel he craved, and begged his sister to leave her behind. But this she at once refused—it was not part of the scheme she had been sent over to accomplish. She took an affectionate farewell of her brother and departed, wisely taking *La Belle Bretonne* back with her to Paris, and bringing back also the welcome news to Louis that Charles had signed the treaty binding his interests to those of France, and that he would further make a public confession of the Catholic Faith, but that the date of this declaration was to be left

entirely to his good pleasure. Louis loaded *Madame* with rich presents and much consideration, and acknowledged his obligations in every possible way. The whole royal family of France received her back with every token of delight, all save her husband. *Monsieur* was in a sullen and evil mood, and refused to allow his wife to go to Versailles, though he was obliged to do so for a few days on a command from his royal brother, which he did with a very bad grace, and shortly took her and her children to St. Cloud. On the 28th of June *Madame* complained of being in bad health, but it caused no special alarm, as she was always very delicate. Towards evening she asked for a glass of chicory water which she was in the habit of taking. She was seized at once with the most horrible pains and fell into convulsions. Her ladies hastened to her assistance and laid her on her bed, where she rolled in agony. *Monsieur* was summoned. She was able just to breathe the word "poison". He stood by her bed with an air of indifference and suggested that emetics should be given her. The King had been sent for; the

news that *Madame* was dying had spread abroad, and consternation and dismay was on every countenance. Louis with tears streaming down his face reached her bedside. She lingered some hours, and was able to send loving messages to King Charles. Never did any royal lady pass away more beloved and regretted than this gentle English princess. She was only twenty-six years of age, one of the most amiable and accomplished women of the Court, and beloved by all classes. Her tragic death caused a great sensation. Louis was overwhelmed with grief. He had been informed that the Marquis d'Effiat, one of *Monsieur's* gentlemen, had been seen tampering with a cupboard in *Madame's* apartment, and he sent at once for a man named Morel or Merile, one of the comptrollers of her household, to question him as to what had occurred.

When this man was brought before him, the King sternly informed him that if he told the truth, whatever it was, his life would be spared, but that it depended on himself whether he left Versailles alive that day; he then solemnly asked him who poisoned the Princess.

“The Marquis d’Effiat and myself,” was the cool reply. “It was the Chevalier de Lorraine who procured the drug from Rome, and M. d’Effiat, with my connivance, put it into the chicory water prepared for her Royal Highness.”

“Had my brother cognisance of this deed ?” asked the King, in a low voice.

“No,” was the answer. “*Monsieur* was not let into the secret, for we dared not trust him.”

“I breathe again,” cried Louis fervently. “You may go, wretched man, but you must at once leave my kingdom.”<sup>1</sup>

Whatever his suspicions may have been, he was relieved to find that his brother was not absolutely implicated, and that he would therefore not be obliged to take any steps in the matter ; but there is little or no doubt that the unfortunate lady met her death by foul means, while those who should have protected her from all evil saw the deed accomplished, if not with their absolute connivance, at any rate with strange supineness

<sup>1</sup> *Œuil-de-Bœuf*.

of conduct. It was a dark blot on the reign of Louis XIV. that nothing could ever wash out, and though of course it is possible that *Madame* met her death by natural causes, the medical knowledge of those days being so scanty, and the fear of poison so ever present, none the less, the callousness displayed towards one who appeared to be so much beloved shows great heartlessness, but no tenderness or good feeling was to be expected from a man of such a brutal temperament as Philippe of Orleans ; and not even the King, his brother, dared to express his opinions on the subject.

## CHAPTER VII

### DESPERATE SITUATION

WITH the death of her royal mistress Mlle. de K roualle's place at Court was necessarily at an end. The situation was rather desperate. Charles was clamouring for justice on his sister's murderer, and though Louis genuinely shared in his sorrow, he was unable or unwilling to take any steps in the matter. He wrote a touching letter to the King of England, saying that the loss of one so dear to them both only added to the burden of his regret; but Charles' indignation had to be appeased, and their amicable relations once more be renewed.

“It is much to be feared,” writes Colbert to Lionne, “that the grief of the King of England, which is beyond all that one can imagine, and the evil reports set forth by our

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enemies, may produce a very bad effect." Even Buckingham, who was always for the French, was turning against them.

The Maréchal de Bellefonds was specially sent by Louis with fresh messages of condolence to Charles, but the King did not allow himself to be in any way mollified. "When will the Chevalier of Lorraine be recalled to Versailles," was all the remark he vouchsafed. "I do not know, your Majesty," replied the Maréchal meekly, and he wrote off to the King to tell him of the non-success of his mission. Besides his natural grief at the death of his beloved sister, Charles had a shrewd suspicion, in spite of all protestations, that there had been foul play.

He exonerated Louis from any share in such a transaction, but no words were strong enough to express his feelings as regarded *Monsieur*. "He is a villain, a villain," he reiterated. Something had to be done. Buckingham suggested the King should occupy himself in the care of his dead sister's servants.

It was not till he was willing to drop the

## 74 CHARLES' OFFER TO LOUISE

painful subject that Louis' ministers could feel at ease, and defy both the Dutch and Spanish to do their worst. It was more than ever necessary to have someone about the person of Charles who would be faithful to the interests of France. Who was better fitted for the post than the beautiful French girl on whom the King of England had already cast a covetous eye? The matter was not difficult of arrangement, and Louis XIV. did not find Mlle. de Kéroualle at all unwilling to fall into his plans. At last Louise was brought face to face with the offer of the King of England to come over and form part of his Court, an offer which, backed as it was by her own sovereign, was more of the nature of a command than anything else.

No one who knew anything of that royal harem at Whitehall, still less one who had been brought in contact with the King, could mistake the meaning of this appointment as maid-of-honour to the luckless Catharine of Braganza.

Charles' eagerness to secure the Bretonne beauty prompted him to send over the Duke

of Buckingham with orders to escort the lady across the Channel. He may not have been aware of the fact, but it was the Duke who first spoke to Louis on the advisability of procuring a French mistress for the King of England.

This second George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, son of Charles I.'s favourite, was as worthless a man as his father had been before him. He was born in 1627 at Wallingford House,<sup>1</sup> and he and his brother Francis were brought up and educated with the children of Charles I., so he had known the present King from babyhood. He lived after the Restoration in great state and pomp at Wallingford House, where his expenditure was so reckless that he soon ruined himself. He led a most dissipated life, used to turn day into night, and night into day, and as an old writer affirmed, kept the same hours "as owls and antipodes".<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, he was one of the most brilliant personages at Court.

In his usually insolent manner he generally

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards the Admiralty.

<sup>2</sup> *Genuine Remains*, Butler, vol. ii., p. 72.

## 76 KING'S YACHT FOR LOUISE

went his own way, and either forgot or neglected his royal master's command, being occupied with his own affairs. When he did recall them he started for Calais instead of Dieppe, where the King's yacht was waiting to bring the French lady over, with all due state and regard. Louise remained at Dieppe awaiting instructions in a state of extreme annoyance. She never forgave Buckingham for the slight he put upon her, and he had reason to rue the day when he made the coming favourite his enemy.

What her feelings were when she at last stepped on to the vessel it is impossible for us to gauge in these days. Morals were of a different calibre in the seventeenth century, and what would justly be reckoned a dishonour and against all laws, human and Divine, a thing of horror to a young and beautiful girl, was then judged the greatest distinction the depraved Court could offer.

That Louise was ambitious her after-career fully proves; that her nature was ardent and sensual there is little doubt. The beautiful

portraits of her speak for themselves. But she was no case-hardened, rapacious woman, as were some of those who aspired to those heights of shame, she was only a girl of twenty, with a love of adventure and admiration which had been denied her in her Breton home. The strong passions inherent in her nature had been fostered by the evil counsels of Louis XIV., and she had been tainted by the immorality of the licentious Court of Versailles which had been her first introduction into royal circles. But she hardly anticipated the reception that awaited her.

Charles was tired of his mistresses. The insolent Lady Castlemaine, La Belle Hamilton, the lovely Miss Stewart, the low-born actresses, Nell Gwynn and Davis, besides innumerable others had begun to pall on him. Here was something fresh and unlike the rest, yet in sending for Mlle. de K  roualle he really believed himself actuated by a tender regard for his sister Henrietta's memory. He burst into tears at the sight of Louise, and welcoming her with the greatest kindness took her

at once to the apartments of the Queen, and presented the new maid-of-honour to her in remembrance of their lost sister.

In the life of a mistress of a king, where the record is mainly of evil things, it is something to be able to state some kind and womanly actions on the part of one of these usually audacious beauties. From first to last Louise behaved with courtesy and consideration to the neglected Queen. She entered on her duties with respect, which was more than could be said of most of the ladies of Catharine's Court. "She ever bore herself with a decent carriage toward the desolate Queen,"<sup>1</sup> was said of Louise, but it did not make Catharine love her any the more, for she saw in her but one more false woman to fill her proper place, or rather to be raised above her.

Many descriptions have been given of Mlle. de Kéroualle. "Cette ravissante Bretonne," writes Capefegne, "était blonde, son front large couronné d'une belle chevelure son œuil noir et volontaire, indiquant la race d'ou elle venait. Avec la grace d'une char-

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Judge Jeffreys*, by Irving.

mante et rieuse enfant, elle avait des signes de fermetés.”

In Evelyn's *Diary* we read: “I have seen the famous beauty, but in my opinion she has a mere baby face”.

It was this childish loveliness, the delicate breeding, the languorous movements that attracted the King from the very beginning. Her race and blazon were sufficient to account for her place, first in the French Court and then in the English one. Not that Charles had indeed always shown partiality for refinement of taste in the choice of his mistresses!

Meanwhile the French beauty was established in rooms in Whitehall, and when not in attendance on her royal mistress, the King found some excuse for visiting her.

If, as some writers assert, Louise had already succumbed to lovers in France, and had not hitherto led a chaste life at that Court, she bore herself with much discretion at Whitehall, but she knew for what purpose she was there, and perhaps merely wanted to increase the King's passion while posing as an innocent and

## 80 LADY CASTLEMAINE'S WRATH

virtuous girl. The other ladies were naturally furious, and Lady Castlemaine lost no time in making war on the new-comer. She insisted on Charles making her Duchess of Cleveland, a title which had been suggested but not yet bestowed upon her, and she declared herself ready to support the Spanish cause. She moreover urged that her two sons should be created Marquis of Southampton and Earl of Northumberland. But all these added honours did not relieve her from the rival's presence.

The winter was passed in a round of gaiety, masked balls and other entertainments. Mlle. de Kéroualle was greatly admired, but so far had not given way one inch. She knew her weakness as well as her strength, she saw that the English people looked upon her with an unfavourable eye, and realised that her only chance lay in the downfall of the last-made Duchess. So she proceeded with caution, resisting all the King's blandishments.

So much so indeed, and so careful was she that the French ambassador became uneasy ;





PORTRAIT OF LOUISE DE KÉROUALLE

By SIR PETER LELY

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he did not understand Louise's manœuvres, and feared the rehabilitation of the dangerous Castlemaine. "It will be necessary to conciliate that lady," he wrote to his master.<sup>1</sup>

That one young girl should hold the situation while they raged in the Court of France at the delay, while in England they looked almost with dismay at the probable downfall of the Duchess of Cleveland, was to say the least a curious situation. Colbert saw with joy the influence of the latter diminishing, and kept Louis daily informed, and related the discomfiture of Molina, the Spanish ambassador.

"How long will this little girl resist," was the question asked by Louis XIV., Louvois, Lionne, Colbert and all the French Court. "The credit of Madame de Cleveland diminishes daily, while the friendship of the King of England for Mlle. de Kéroualle increases daily," writes Colbert to Louvois. All these grave men of office were waiting with feverish excitement to see what the "baby-faced" beauty would please to do.

<sup>1</sup> Colbert au Roi, 12th December, 1670.

## 82 LORD ARLINGTON'S OPINION

Was ever such a predicament or Court lady so obdurate? Such a case was unknown! Colbert wrote to the King in this strain while Charles' passion increased visibly.

But Louis got anxious, so many weighty matters hinged upon what appeared on the surface to be a mere love affair. The diplomatic relations of Europe hung in the balance. The English ministers also watched the case with anxiety, but from another motive. Lord Arlington considered that a young French girl would be far less dangerous to the interests of the country than the class of mistress Charles had hitherto affected. Court ladies with a power for intrigue were very much to be feared; women who mixed themselves up in affairs wormed out secrets, and were the ruin of all who came in their way. Equally reprehensible were the low vulgar comedians, creatures unfit for company with the King. At least when in the society of the young maid-of-honour, he would remain in the royal apartments, and every one knew how and when he could be found.

Lady Arlington was of opinion it was the

best thing that could happen, and she would strongly advise the young lady to agree with the King's request.<sup>1</sup> At least this was what Colbert wrote to Louis, and evidently he had found an associate in the minister's wife.

He informed his royal master that all the ministers sought the friendship of this young lady. Lord Arlington did not scruple to announce publicly that he entirely approved of the idea.

The courtiers agog with excitement related to each other that King Charles visited Mlle. de K roualle every morning at nine o'clock, but that the young lady was too discreet to receive him at other times. Her rooms at Whitehall were said to be beautifully furnished, and that every honour was paid her. St. Evremond, as one of Louise's *compatriotes*, thought fit to offer her his advice on this delicate subject. He wrote what was called a "Probl me," in imitation of the Spanish, to Mlle. de K roualle, and gave her his views on the situation.

"I ask myself," he began, "what injures

<sup>1</sup> Colbert letter, 8th October, 1671.

most the happiness of a woman, whether to give way to all the abandonments of passion, or to follow rigidly the paths of virtue. Is the former really followed by more trouble and evil, or does the life of constraint which takes away all pleasure benefit in the end. I would point out, that a woman finds more annoyances in a convent, so I trust that you will continue to live in the world, and not consent to cloister yourself. I fear you want to accomplish two things which are incompatible, love and reserved conduct. This is impossible, but you need fear no dreariness in life if you follow a decent behaviour and love only one person at a time.”

Such was the advice offered in writing, and doubtless in all good faith. There was evidently no cautioning hand held forth to restrain Louise, and now the minister, Lord Arlington, and his wife, were urging her on to her fate. The Countess of Arlington was a Dutch woman, who loved a gay and luxurious life, and entertained with fine hospitality. She entered into Colbert's plans all the more, that she had been obliged to consent to the engage-

ment of her only daughter, still quite a child, to a son of the Duchess of Cleveland, and seeing the downfall of the favourite imminent, she determined to make friends with the rising star. She therefore invited Mlle. de K roualle to pay her a visit at Euston, so that Charles could join their party from Newmarket, where he was bound for the races.

Euston was a huge pile of buildings built of red brick. It was adorned by balustrades of stone and many statues and ornamentations. It was quite the show-place of the county, and was about three miles from Thetford. The original house had been burnt almost to the ground, but Lord Arlington had rebuilt it and made magnificent additions with great skill. There was a picture gallery, an orangery and a chapel. It was laid out with series of suites of apartments quite isolated one from the other, and could accommodate an immense number of persons. The rooms set aside for the royal guest were beautifully frescoed and richly furnished, it was a regal house, and fit to receive a king within its portals.

The gardens were laid out with great taste, and the park, full of fine timber, was besides well stocked with deer. The stables were on the same princely scale, and filled with carriages and horses.

The Court was at Newmarket, but the King agreed to come over every other day, and invited the house party from Euston to his palace there to attend the races.

Colbert, who seems to have excelled in letter writing and kept the French king well informed of every move in the game, describes the life at Euston, being one of the guests.

“The king,” he wrote, “comes to dine, and always spends some hours with Mlle. de Kéroualle. He has already paid three visits. He invited us yesterday to dine at Newmarket, where we were very finely entertained, and he showed every possible attention to the lady, with all the eagerness a great passion can inspire, and as she gives signs of much pleasure in his attentions, it is the general belief that this will be an



attachment surpassing all others and of long duration."

The days and nights at Euston were spent in merriment and dissipation. The courtiers and great ladies had assembled for their own amusement, and Charles came, drawn by the magnet of Louise's eyes. The whole affair had been got up to please him, and he joined readily in the various diversions.

The Countess of Sunderland assisted Lady Arlington in leading the revels, and every one with one accord flattered and amused *La Belle Bretonne*, who found herself the centre of attraction.

At last, tired of every frolic, they proposed to have a mock marriage. Whether this was by accident or pre-arranged it is difficult to say. Evelyn, who was one of the guests, declared that he had never seen any party at Euston exceed the bounds of decorum; but he also admits he was only twice at the King's table, and did not know all that went on.<sup>1</sup> Anyway, the burlesque wedding was got up with much pomp and ceremony,

<sup>1</sup> *Diary*, 9th October, 1671.

and amid much merriment; and with all the coarseness which characterised that age even among the highest of the lords and ladies, the nuptial festivities were carried out in every detail, even to leaving Mlle. de K  roualle in the arms of the King.

The thin veil that had hidden Charles' real intentions was torn away, and Louise returned to London his avowed mistress.

The coarse, voluptuous features of Charles II., worn as they were, first by hardships and then by sensuality, do not appear likely to attract a young girl, and yet there must have been a charm of manner and a personal magnetism in this dissipated Stuart king, for he seemed capable of inspiring great fondness among the women who shared his affections.

That Louise from the first admired him is certain; she soon became genuinely attached to him, and gladly accepted the position he offered her without misgivings. She entered on her new life with happiness, chose to consider herself a sort of morganatic wife, deluding herself doubtless into the belief that

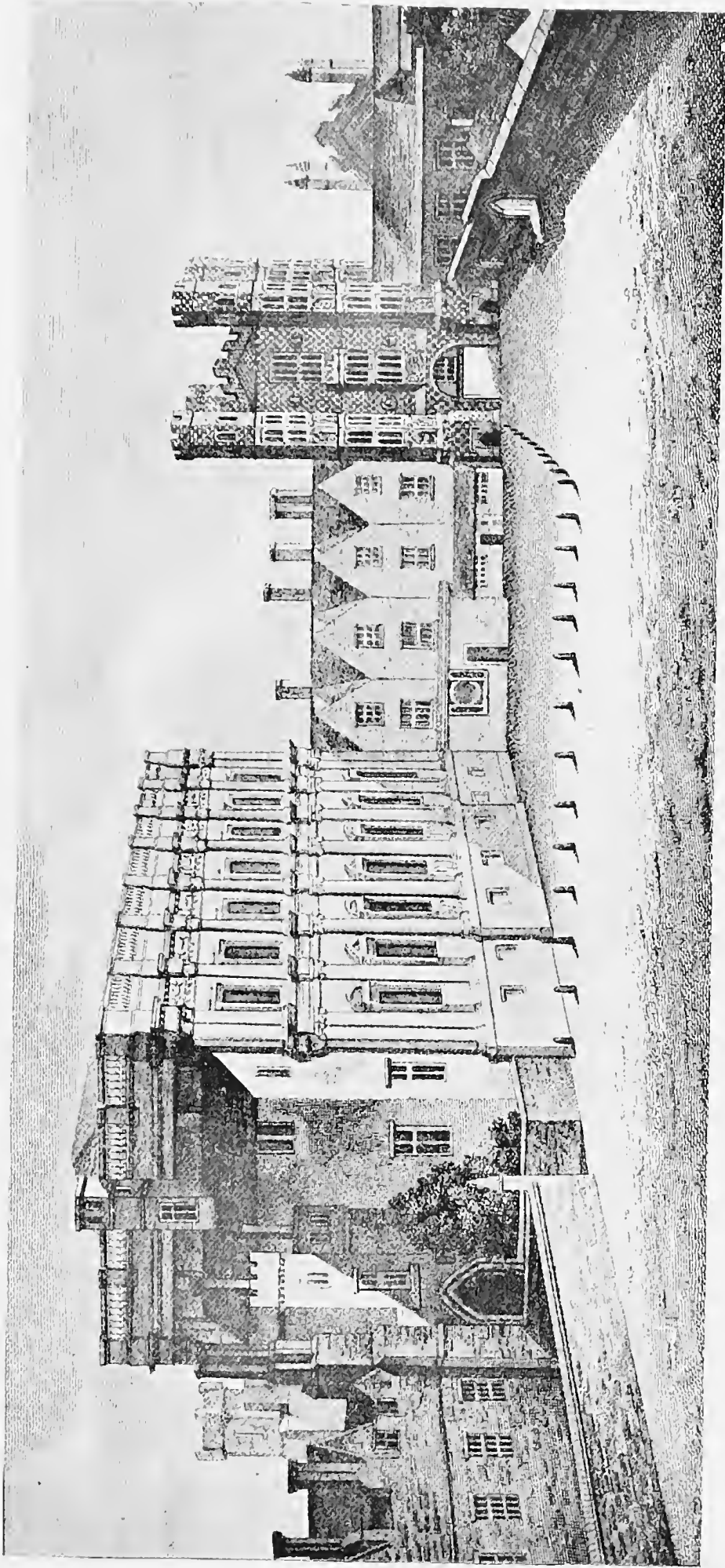
there was nothing irregular in her life. That she loved him very dearly to the end is very certain, and she held the chief place in his fickle heart almost entirely from that time on.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHITEHALL

WHITEHALL was the pivot round which the world of London moved. Outside the city walls, along the river-side, between the villages of Charing Cross and Westminster, it contained within its walls the fate of many, perhaps indeed that of the whole nation. The stately palace had stood for many generations originally built by Cardinal Wolsey for ecclesiastical purposes. The old pictures that give us some idea of its size and buildings only add to the difficulty of picturing it on its present site, as hardly any part of the original palace is now existent.

It stood in the middle of fields and covered a large area with its cavalry barracks, banqueting hall, tilt-yards and two cock-pits. Moreover, it was full of separate sets of apartments. Those of the King faced the river, and



WHITEHALL IN 1680

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the Queen's were adjoining. The rooms appointed for the new favourite were between the river and the Stone Gallery, now the site of Richmond Terrace. Green lawns ran down to the river's bank, rich orchards abounded in the neighbourhood, while shady bowling alleys and other places for amusement surrounded the grey pile of buildings.

Jollity and merriment sounded within its walls, for although it was the abode of state and magnificence, the pleasure-loving monarch held high revels in the palace, for he ever wanted his fill of ease and entertainment. In those days Newmarket was his favourite place for relaxation, but whether there or in London walking was one of his chief diversions. He was a great pedestrian, and he went at such a pace his gentlemen found it difficult to keep up with him, for he would spend several hours in this favourite exercise.

At Newmarket he would walk till ten o'clock—and they kept early hours at that time—and then repair to the cock-pit. That amusement never seemed to pall; no doubt the betting on the feathered combatants was as

extensive as at the horse-races in the afternoon.

The Palace of Newmarket was built or at least completed under the directions of Charles. The architect was Wren.

He was a very small man, and rather consequential in his manner. Once when Charles complained of the want of height of the rooms, Wren said: "I think, and it please your Majesty, they are high enough". Charles squatted down to Wren's height, and creeping about in this whimsical posture replied: "Ay, Sir Christopher, I think they are high enough".<sup>1</sup>

When in London it was the King's custom to saunter into St. James's Park. One of Charles' hobbies was birds and all kind of feathered fowls.

There were aviaries all down Birdcage Walk, hence the name, as far as Storey's Gate, where Edmund Storey, the keeper of the King's birds, lived.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Richardsoniana.

<sup>2</sup> When the building at what is now called Storey's Gate was in process of construction about 1900, and the foundations were being laid, the remains of an old landing-stage



This part of London was, of course, open country at that time, there was no gate or enclosure then. Carts bearing market produce, brought from the country farms in boats on the Thames, would pass that way, and Whitehall Gardens and Spring Gardens across the way was a favourite Sunday evening stroll with the people.

There was plenty of wild fowl with which the ornamental piece of water was, as now, well stocked. Charles used to feed them himself, and discuss their breeds and habits with the keepers. The Government of Duck Island, as the small clump of trees in the middle of the water at the western end was called, was conferred, with a small salary as a mark of royal favour, on St. Evremond.<sup>1</sup> It was spoken of as "the first and last government," but this was not the case, for it was a sinecure which had existed for some time, and had formerly been be-

were discovered, supposed to have been that of the monks of Westminster, as a stream now underground ran down from north London into the Thames at that point.

<sup>1</sup> Pennant's *London*.

stowed on Sir John Flock, who had been a comrade of the King when in exile. Of course the post was looked upon as a joke. The King's spaniels were his constant companions and a source of pleasure to him, and his name is still mentioned in connection with that particular breed of dog, which was called after him.

He had always a pleasant word for every one, and would talk to the meanest of his subjects, and liked by his jesting remarks to learn something of their true opinions. He did not mind a jest when personal to himself, but would bandy words with pleasure. Once when arguing with Lord Shaftesbury he exclaimed: "I believe thou art the wickedest fellow in my dominions".

"For a subject, sire, I believe I am," was the witty but impertinent rejoinder, but Charles laughed heartily at the retort.

Constitution Hill in those days was almost in the open country, leading to Hyde Park, which although a royal enclosure was a regular forest, and the abode of much game

and wild deer. It was a lonely road, and the King was strolling along one morning accompanied only by the Duke of Leeds and Lord Cromarty. On the way they met the Duke of York returning from hunting on Hounslow Heath. The guards perceiving the King stopped the Duke's coach, and James instantly alighted to pay his respects to the monarch, and expressed his uneasiness at seeing him abroad with so small an attendance, endangering his valuable life.

“No kind of danger, James,” replied Charles laughing, “for I am sure no man in England will take away *my* life to make *you* King.”<sup>1</sup>

All the same, the wisdom of the Duke's words were apparent to the gentlemen, and it was soon after this that the following extract appeared in an order, issued in 1671 :—

“An officer of our horse-guards is always to attend and follow next our person when we walk abroad, or pass up and down from

<sup>1</sup> Dr. King's *Anecdotes of his Own Time*.

one place to another, as well within doors as without, excepting always our bedchamber.”<sup>1</sup>

This order was issued when Blood made his daring attempt on the Crown jewels; whether it originally sprang from apprehension of personal danger, or merely from the people pressing on the King in his walks is now difficult to ascertain.

The happy reply of Blood when Charles inquired how he dared to make his bold attempt on the Crown jewels, seems to have prejudiced the King in his favour.

“My father,” said Blood, “lost a good estate in fighting *for* the Crown, and I considered it no harm to recover it *by* the Crown.”

A witty answer on the part of himself or any one else always restored Charles’ good humour, and he invariably got the better of the rather heavy and dull James. The royal brothers were very good friends, and the King took care to leave all the burden of difficult or tiresome work to the Duke of York, whose

<sup>1</sup> Pegge’s *Curalia*, vol. i., p. 79.

plodding nature was equal to the task. He sat in the Council Chamber at Whitehall or at St. James's Palace day after day, receiving applicants for post or promotion, or officers of State desirous of discussing some important matter. His was the wearisome task of receiving petitions and hearing grievances, and having to represent all these matters to the King.

Charles would drop in for an hour, but he quickly wearied of business, and would soon depart for a game of *pêle-mêle*, a game somewhat like tilting at the ring on foot.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Duke of York held no small position, being as he was at the head of affairs, he roused no enthusiasm among the people, not only on account of his somewhat uninteresting personality, but also because he made no secret of his adherence to the Church of Rome, which deeply offended the Protestant people of England, more especially as he was at that time, and likely to continue, heir-presumptive. Though

<sup>1</sup> The present Pall Mall was the site chosen for the game.

## 98 CATHARINE'S DISAPPOINTMENT

with constant hopes of becoming a mother, Catharine of Braganza never realised that wish, which was a source of disappointment both to the Court and the nation.

## CHAPTER IX

### BIRTH OF HER SON

WITH the birth of a son, 29th July, 1672, Louise de Kéroualle's position was considered absolutely secure. The child was named Charles Lennox. Louis XIV. sent his congratulations to the young mother through his ambassador. Colbert writes: "I was able to give much pleasure to Mlle. de Kéroualle in assuring her of His Majesty's satisfaction, and his desire that she should long remain in the good graces of King Charles. To all appearance she is likely to do so, to the exclusion of all others."<sup>1</sup>

That famous woman of letters, Mme. de Sévigné, who being from Brittany was extremely jealous of the triumphs of *La Belle Bretonne*, wrote with great bitterness and

<sup>1</sup> Colbert to Louvois, 17 2.

## 100 THREE POINTS OF IMPORTANCE

sarcasm of the success of the latter to her daughter, Madame de Grignan.

“Do you not think that La Kéroualle has worked out her destiny very cleverly, though it causes no surprise as all knew how her star was pointing. The King of England loves her, she is mildly inclined to like him also, and now she has a child. The Castlemaine is in disgrace, and that is the way things are done in that kingdom.”

Louis lost no time in utilising the Frenchwoman, for through her means he saw his way to deriving three points of importance. An alliance against Holland, the profession of faith of Charles to the Church of Rome, and the marriage of James Duke of York to a princess chosen by Louis himself.

These things came about in time, at least the league against Holland very shortly was announced, for Charles declared war with the Dutch even before Louise's son was born. The declaration of faith was far harder to obtain, though she never ceased urging on the King to take this step, and she was backed by l'Abbé Patrice, almoner of the Queen.



The Duke of York, on the other hand, made no secret of his religious beliefs; his wife had died lately, and had openly professed her real feelings with all the fervour of a pervert. On all sides the French Court were pressing him to marry a Roman Catholic princess, but he was in no great hurry to change his state of widowerhood, though willing enough to release himself from the bondage imposed upon him by his mistress Arabella Churchill, for he had taken up with a young girl, daughter of Sir Charles Sedley, who for the moment fully occupied his thoughts and fulfilled all his desires.<sup>1</sup>

Colbert saw clearly that Mlle. de K  roualle had a difficult path to pursue in spite of being King Charles' mistress and having given him a child. The former favourites, great ladies like the Duchesses of Cleveland and Richmond, or fascinating and intriguing actresses might well prove too much for a stranger and a foreigner, in spite of the royal favours she had attained.

He did not think either that she knew how

<sup>1</sup> She was afterwards created Countess of Dorchester.

to play her cards well, and she had been heard to say that she saw no reason why she should not be Queen of England, as Catharine of Braganza was suffering from a mortal complaint.

This of course was highly injudicious, and the report quite without foundation, considering that the Queen lived for thirty-two years after that. Some of the Court physicians though, knowing Charles' desire to have a second wife who would give him an heir, supported the theory that the Queen's health was seriously impaired. As a fact the careless King was mainly engaged with the affairs of the moment, and he did not worry himself about the troubles or quarrels of his wife or his favourites.

The Duchess of Cleveland held him still, by right of the four children she had borne him, and encountered her rival daily in the rooms of the injured Queen. Her temper was violent, her intrigues numerous, while Louise was tender, languishing, and wholly devoted to the interests of France. "One deceives

him by her infidelities, the other sells his secrets. One laughs and the other weeps.”<sup>1</sup> But Louise did not weep for long. Nell Gwynn was looked upon with most favour by the people generally. In that coarse age the lively, witty actress, with her clever tongue and indelicate speech, amused the King and appealed to the populace. It was play-acting carried into everyday life; but there was something about the beautiful young Frenchwoman, stronger than a mere appeal to the senses, that held Charles enthralled.

The English people hated the foreign mistress, and looked upon her as an avowed enemy, and this was hardly surprising. It was an open secret that the King confided to her his annoyance at the opposition of his parliament, and told her he saw no other means of having his own way save by dissolving it. At least so Colbert, who acted as a spy for France, wrote to his correspondent Louvois, the Minister of War, in July, 1673. It was said of Mlle. de K  roualle, in one of the defamatory pamphlets

<sup>1</sup> Colbert to Louvois, 1672.

of the day, in which they wrote every insulting and damaging thing that they could hear or invent, that this young girl, by her penetration, her gift of memory and sparkling intellect enabled her to see clearly how to maintain the diplomatic situation. This was great praise coming as it did from her enemies. She had, moreover, the tact not to worry Charles by insisting on his making the declaration of faith asked for by Louis, besides seeing that the English would have to grow accustomed to the idea by degrees, for the Duke of York had greatly injured the cause by declaring too prematurely his change of opinions.

The maid-of-honour who had held such an unimportant position in the little Court of *Madame* of Orleans, now began, though still only Mlle. de K  roualle, to assert her independence, and fearing that the Duke of York would marry a German princess she began to intrigue for a lady of the House of Lorraine, daughter of the Duchesse d'Elb  uf, who was willing enough to place her daughters under the protection of King Charles' mistress, thus

showing to the world the importance that Louise had attained in the eyes of the Court of Versailles.

The demoiselles d'Elbœuf were poor, but they were aristocratic and handsome girls. Louise counted on their beauty being sufficient to attract the Duke of York, and she had pictures of them placed in his rooms that he might get used to the idea, but he declared they were too young.

Nothing daunted, Louise kept up a correspondence with their mother, Madame d'Elbœuf, but Colbert, the French ambassador, did not approve of the alliance. He called in the aid of the Earl of Arlington, who also pressed Mlle. de Kéroualle to give up this idea, and when she refused, he reproached her for her want of gratitude seeing what he had done for her; "but obligations are forgotten as easily and as quickly as a good dinner," he said reproachfully.

But in the end the ambassador was worsted, though Louise had the tact, once she had obtained the victory, to give up the struggle as

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regarded the young princesses of the House of Lorraine, but turned her attention to a Princess of Modena. She did not choose to give way to Colbert, but when she found the match was entirely against the wishes of Louis XIV., who wrote to Colbert that he had his private reason against the match, she wisely let the matter drop.

She had, moreover, other schemes of more personal interest. She wished to become a naturalised Englishwoman with the view of being better able to benefit by gifts of State money Charles had promised her, and also she wanted an English title. That of Countess of Farnham had been suggested, or Baroness Petersfield.

Louise adored her child and so did Charles, and yet a whole year had passed and he had not recognised him openly, but now so infatuated had he become with *La Belle Bretonne*, that he determined to give her every honour in his power.

The boy was created Duke of Lennox in Scotland, with the right to bear the royal

arms on his shield, and Duke of Richmond in England, while the young mother was made Duchess of Portsmouth. Little recked Louise now of the jealousies and covert insults with which her enemies did their best to assail her. She felt her position now secured, and revelled in her new happiness, nor was she ennobled and exalted in England only. Perhaps no one rejoiced more at the turn affairs had taken than Louis XIV., when he saw the success of his well-laid schemes. The future of France and her diplomatic relations with Europe hung on the conduct of the French mistress, who, young and inexperienced as she was, had up to now served him well and faithfully. To show his approbation of her, he created her Duchesse d'Aubigny, a title which the royal House of Stuart had possessed since the days of Charles VII., and he bestowed on her as well the lands pertaining to it at Aubigny-sur-Nièvre in Berry.

These lands had been given in 1422 by Charles VII. to John Stuart for his services to France, with the understanding they

should return to the French Crown at the death of the last male heir. This was the Duke of Richmond, husband of Miss Stewart, who had lately died. By bestowing them on the mother of the infant Duke of Richmond, it was once more detached from the Crown, so the gift was indeed a princely one.

When the intelligence of this honour reached Whitehall, Charles in an ecstasy of joy rushed to Louise's apartment to have the pleasure of being himself the bearer of the good news, and share in her surprise and delight.

To be a Duchess in her own country was indeed an honour to be proud of, and meant far more to her than those titles bestowed in England on herself and her son; but Colbert had no intention of allowing this addition to be made among the nobles of France, though Louise was ignorant of his design. He took care that it should be bestowed as a favour. She received ducal lands certainly, but there was no mention



made of heirs in remainder, and he trusted to the possibility that the title would die with her.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The title of Duc d'Aubigny in France is still held by the Duke of Richmond and Gordon.

## CHAPTER X

### THE DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH

AND now began for her, who but a short time before had been a little Breton maiden of no account, a time of splendour such as in the wildest dreams of her girlhood at Guiler in Finisterre she could never have imagined. Her rooms at Whitehall filled with every possible luxury and adorned with marvellous *objets d'arts* given her by her royal lover, were a spectacle and a wonder. They far excelled those of the Queen for splendour and riches. Marvellous services of plate loaded the sideboards. Cabinets of incredible value lined the walls, and contained priceless china. Pictures, jewelled ornaments and costly toys of all kinds crowded the rooms, and made them a subject of perpetual conversation and the object of no little envy. In the gallery outside the

courtiers hung about, on the chance of obtaining a few words with the King, or of entering those rooms sacred to the beautiful Duchess. Curiosity was rife about them, for rumours got abroad of the constant alterations that were made inside them to suit her taste and fancy, and there too was to be seen the new French fabric tapestries familiar only to the dwellers of Versailles and St. Germain, "which was of most tender work and design and an incomparable imitation of the best painting".<sup>1</sup> Lovely landscapes and hunting scenes, with the French palaces as backgrounds, were some of the views depicted thereon. It was the habit of the monarch to stroll through the long gallery to the Duchess' rooms to be present at her levée himself, and he made his way through the throng of obsequious courtiers, listening to their flattering remarks, to where the object of his affections held her Court, like the uncrowned queen that she had become. Wrapped in a loose robe of priceless lace, she received her lord and the gentlemen

<sup>1</sup> Evelyn's *Diary*, 10th Sept., 1675.

of highest distinction who accompanied him, while the Court gallants crowded in behind them. Her wonderful hair which her maids combed out had been the admiration of every one when she first came over, but judging by the well-known portrait of her, it seems likely that she sacrificed it to the prevailing fashion. In a letter written by Mme. de Sévigné to her daughter she gives the account of a new mode of hairdressing which reads singularly like the style that the Duchess of Portsmouth wore when her picture was painted.<sup>1</sup> “Imagine a mode of hairdressing now in vogue. The hair is divided in front *à la paysanne*, and left flat on top of the head for about two inches from the parting. The hair is then cut on both sides in layers just the right length to roll in thick curls, they must not be cut too short, because they must appear as if they curled naturally, and some ladies having not been careful in this respect their hair is all frizzed up and a terrible example, which others would do well to

<sup>1</sup> See No. 6 illustration. This appears to be the hairdressing mentioned.



PORTRAIT OF DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH AS ARCADIAN BERGÈRE

By SIR PETER LEY

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profit by. Ribbons are passed between the curls, and tied in a great bow on one side. I wonder if you will understand my description? I will have a doll dressed as a model for you. Madame de Crussel when attending the Queen's (Marie Therèse) coucher, said to her, 'I see your Majesty has taken to our Coiffure'. 'Your Coiffure indeed,' replied the Queen, in a tone of annoyance. 'I assure you I have done nothing of the kind. I have had my hair cut because the King likes it best so, it was certainly not done to imitate my ladies.' Madame de Montespan, Mme. de Nevers and other fine ladies have adopted this fashion."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps Charles, like Louis, approved of this style, but it was a terrible sacrifice for those who had lovely hair.

Her mode of existence was semi-royal also. Once when the doctors ordered her change of air, the King insisted on her being placed in charge of his own doctor at Windsor, and she was escorted there in state, accom-

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Mme. de Sévigné to Mme. de Grignan, 4th April, 1671.

panied by a detachment of the Household Brigade.

One is lost in wonder as to what her real thoughts and feelings were at this moment in her strangely exalted position, and had it altogether turned her head it would not have been surprising. But there is no question of that, her talent was quite equal to her fascinations, and she did not reign by them alone. She was a born diplomat, with a marvellous turn for politics, or rather, we may say for intrigue. One word might very well serve for both in those corrupt days.

She did not allow herself either to be lulled into any false sense of security, as a weaker woman might have done, even when Charles added to the many honours already heaped upon her, when with much gallantry he joined to his little son's arms the graceful motto "*En la Rose je fleuris*," which is borne by the Dukes of Richmond to the present time.

He might indeed flourish exceedingly through his love for her in his own estimation, but Louise knew well the perils that surrounded him, and ever kept a watchful eye



on his interests. It was said that she stood to Charles in much the same position as did Madame de Montespan to Louis. Both had somewhat of the same character, firm, proud and unbending, where grave matters were at issue, though in private life the Duchess of Portsmouth was languid and languorous. She was no mere vulgar, rapacious mistress, but she displayed all the energy of her race when it came to dealing with important matters. She was not long in learning the vacillating nature of her lord and master, and she knew how necessary it was to persuade him to have a definite aim.

The system of the Stuarts rested on two facts which have more or less existed in England ever since: Religious liberty and alliance with France. Whatever their failings they stood up for the rights of the religion they professed. It has been said the men of that royal race were ruined through their weakness for women, but in the troubled career so many of them led, their most chivalrous instincts and happiest days were due to this characteristic.

Their Courts were immoral, it is true, and they had recourse after all their trials, and in some cases wanderings, to ease and relaxation among what have been called the left-handed queens of England.

But was the House of Hanover after all more moral? It was not only the reckless race brought up among the influences of the French Court for generations who were more to be held in reprobation than the stolid and heavy but equally immoral sovereigns who succeeded them on the throne of England.

One age cannot be judged by another, and with all his faults Charles II., at one time at any rate, was greatly beloved in England. True, his reckless extravagance and disregard of the good of his people, together with his Popish proclivities, had somewhat alienated their feelings from the time when with joyous greeting they welcomed their exiled sovereign back at the Restoration. But there was a charm of manner about Charles which made him a popular favourite. The glories of Whitehall were the pride of society, and the

Merry Monarch, as he was fondly called, was popular with all.

At last, however, his lavish expenditure on his many mistresses and bastard children, instead of bestowing his wealth for the good of the people, brought about a feeling of revolt. That and his supposed religious tenets gradually drew away their love, and in the latter years of his reign he was looked upon with suspicion and mistrust.

Much has been written and said about the strong anti-popish spirit in England, a spirit which has always existed, but it was not the chief cause of the hatred of the new mistress *Madam Carwell*, as she was familiarly called.<sup>1</sup>

Queen Catharine was of that persuasion, had her own chapel, her priests and Roman Catholic members of her suite. No great objection was raised to them. But deeper even than the Englishman's love of his religion was his rooted aversion to France, it was an undying hatred carried on from one generation to another, and to them no good thing could come out of France.

<sup>1</sup> A corruption of K roualle,

The position of the Duchess of Portsmouth at Whitehall had become a very important one, and the nation fully realised that fact.

None knew it better than the Duke of Buckingham, although he was conscious she had never forgiven him his want of courtesy towards her, but he pretended not to be cognisant of the fact.

He would kiss with profound respect her gloved hand, as indeed he had done in the case of Miss Stewart and Nell Gwynn, and all the ladies his King delighted to honour, when their stars were in the ascendant. It was his conviction that to rule a people, or a court, it was essential to direct and regulate their vices and not make an attack upon them. He was fully aware of Louise's talents, and felt that it was no mean foe with whom he had now to cross his sword. Louise de K roualle had studied the tactics of La Vali re and Montespan, and as Duchess of Portsmouth was quite equal to the situation. It had been said of her in the beginning "that the silk ribbon that fastened round the waist of Mlle. de K roualle was

the zone that bound France and England,"<sup>1</sup> and now she put her whole mind to sustaining the alliance between those countries. Yet with it all she worked for what she considered the good of the King, and why should she not have done so, for was he not her lover and the father of her child. Louis may have found her his useful tool, but she was never his dupe, and was, moreover, for the time being absolute mistress of the situation. But while Louise's affairs prospered, those of Louis her patron and master did not. All Europe had turned against France, even the Prussians of Brandenburg, upon whom he had always looked with infinite scorn, one of his sayings about them being, "We can expect nothing good from them until they have learned the lesson, that they are incapable of doing us harm". Now this insignificant foe had joined forces with Holland, and Spain had followed their example. A strong measure, for that most Catholic country loathed the Protestant people of the north; probably, however, they thought the Dutch less hateful than the English.

<sup>1</sup> St. Evremond,

“If the Dutch also,” wrote the Comte d’Estrades from London, “join hands with Spain and the Netherlands, a war will ensue such as we shall never see the end of.”

It was more a question of faith than politics, and hatred of the French, and hatred of the Papists, began once more to be the dominant feeling in England.

## CHAPTER XI

### HENRIETTE DE KÉROUALLE

SHORTLY after that the Duchess of Portsmouth had received her titles and honours, she bethought herself of sending for her young sister, Henriette Mauricette de Penancoët. Louise had all a Breton's love of kindred, and being naturally of a very affectionate disposition, she longed not only to promote the welfare of her own kith and kin, but to see some of them once more.

England could never have been a land of adoption to her, surrounded as she was by enemies and rivals, and her heart must have ached sometimes to see not only the faces dear to her, but the rugged coasts and fertile valleys of Brittany.

The King at that period granted her every whim, so he fell readily into the plan she pro-

posed. A yacht was sent to Brest to fetch Henriette, one of the household having been ordered to bring her in safety. Naturally her arrival was a subject of much ill-natured talk, and as she was very young and of homely features, not the least like her beautiful sister, she was at once run down and slighted by the tongues of scandal.

“Henriette de Kéroualle is nothing to look at. She came alone with a gentleman, who was sent in a yacht to Brest to fetch her. She was at once given £600 a year.”<sup>1</sup> Naturally her arrival was a cause of jealousy, and no one could see why the King should give an income to the Duchess of Portsmouth's sister.

What the attitude of the Comte and Comtesse de Kéroualle was at his juncture it is difficult to imagine. They must have taken their eldest daughter's brilliant shame complacently by their allowing their remaining girl to join her sister in England. Whether it was from apathy, or whether it was owing

<sup>1</sup> Ruvigny à Pomponne, 12 Mai, 1674.



to the easy morals of their time, they accepted the situation apparently without a protest.

Louise was overjoyed to see her sister, and the King welcomed the new arrival with much kindness. The allowance he gave her was a very handsome one in those days, he, moreover, appointed her suitable apartments, and evidently lent himself to Louise's idea of making a good marriage for Henriette. Whether the sister of the King's mistress was generally considered a suitable alliance by those about the Court it is difficult to say. No doubt it was often extremely useful, indeed often necessary, to be sure of access to the royal ear, and who could easier secure that privilege than the relative of the all-powerful Duchess. So possibly many looked with an eye of favour on the plain French girl, because of the royal dower it was known she would have on her marriage, and the interest and favour she would doubtless bring with her. Perhaps, on the other hand, the Duchess did not find it so easy as she had imagined to settle her sister satisfactorily. Certainly her

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choice was far from a fortunate one, or rather probably it was the King's selection, for he sanctioned Henriette's betrothal to Philip, seventh Earl of Pembroke. Lord Pembroke was a man of infamous conduct, in fact his vices were carried to such an extent that they almost amounted to madness. Shortly before this time he had been committed to the Tower for an atrocious act of blasphemy.<sup>1</sup> His temper was violent, his habits of drinking notorious, and his life loose and dissipated to a degree. It was cruel to place a young and innocent girl into such hands.

Perhaps the Duchess was not aware of the extent of his evil conduct, or perhaps she was bent on getting Henriette married, and had but little choice. Anyway, they did not relinquish the idea. The wedding took place with due splendour, and the new Countess was carried off to reign in the magnificent and almost regal residence of Wilton.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Account of Wiltshire*, by Neville Wilkinson. See Wilton House.

<sup>2</sup> "The Duchess of Portsmouth's sister was married on Thursday to the Earl of Pembroke. The King pays the

No portrait of her exists on these walls, although a lovely one of her sister Louise by Lely is there. There is no record of what the Countess of Pembroke's special sufferings may have been, but life must have been intolerable at times, for she was but a bride of a few months when she appealed to her sister for protection, who at once threatened the Earl that if he did not mend his ways she would make the King interfere. This sobered Pembroke for a time, besides he wanted an heir, and his wife was about to become a mother. Henriette was of a shallow nature, and had none of the talent of Louise, and although complaining of her life at intervals, she managed to go her own way, in the matter of personal extravagance she certainly did, and found compensation for her loveless home by reckless expenditure. When her child was born it proved to be a girl, which did not tend to domestic peace. After that she let her brutal husband lead his own life, while

portion."—Letter dated Westminster, 19th December, 1674, the property of Mr. Thomas Stamford Raffles.

she occupied herself with her little daughter Charlotte. She probably was a good deal in London, for the Duchess of Portsmouth loved her little niece, and doubtless the sisters were very happy at being together with their children; the little Duke of Richmond was only two years older than Lady Charlotte Herbert, and the cousins must have played together in Whitehall.

It does not follow that Richmond was the King's favourite son, but he was the youngest, and therefore received much attention. Lady Marshall a Scotchwoman, was appointed his governess on a salary of £2,000 a year.<sup>1</sup> Both the Duchesses of Portsmouth and Cleveland had £10,000 a year settled upon them, which was much in excess of the fortunes bestowed on the other ladies.<sup>2</sup> But it was none too

<sup>1</sup> Letter in possession of Sir Harry Verney, 5th August, 1675.

<sup>2</sup> "You have heard doubtless that the Duchess of Portsmouth hath 10,000£ a yeare settled out of the wine licenses. She of Cleveland having chosen hers out of the Excise as the more secure and legall fonds."—Letters of Mr. Thomas Stamford Raffles.

much for Louise who lost large sums at cards. She wished Henriette to have as many luxuries as herself, and tried hard to get Lord Pembroke to give his wife gifts suitable to a person of her quality. He highly resented her interference, defied her to ruin his interests beside the King, and openly called her "the grievance of the nation". He threatened if the Duchess worried him any more to send his Countess back to Whitehall. He was such a worthless reprobate that his words, however, carried but little weight, and Charles was too wise to take any notice of these quarrels.

Jealousy of her position was not confined to the habitués of the Court alone. Madame de Sévigné wrote in another of her famous letters: "La Kéroualle has not been frustrated in anything she has undertaken. She determined to be the mistress of the King and she has succeeded; she wished for a son and she has one, and he has been openly acknowledged and ennobled by his father. But she has found a rival, in the shape of the

young comedian who often takes away the King from her. She is young, witty and reckless, and scorns the high-born lady who accepts the same place as herself. The Duchess pretends that every great person in France is her relative.”<sup>1</sup>

This was true, and sometimes Louise allowed her vanity to overcome her good sense and good taste, and she was ridiculed for her intense devotion to France. When the Chevalier de Rohan died, who belonged to one of the greatest families in Brittany, she wore deep mourning, and though there may have been kinship between them it was no near relationship.<sup>2</sup> She never forgot her own rank and breeding, or her beloved country, and valued it far more than her English title and position.

When the Comte and Comtesse de Kéroualle

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Sévigné's letters, 11th September, 1675, vol. v., p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> “The Duchess of Portsmouth is in deep mourning for the Chevalier de Rohan, as being forsooth of kin to that family.”—19th December, 1674. Letters of Mr. Thomas Stamford Raffles.

arrived in London to visit their daughters, they were received with much politeness. They did not stay with them however, but lodged with an old friend Sir Richard Browne, whom they had known when he was a refugee in France during the Rebellion. Evelyn in his *Diary* mentions having met them, and speaks of them in flattering terms.

From him we learn that the Count had a military air, and was a fine soldierly-looking man, with the frank open countenance of the Breton. The Comtesse had the remains of great beauty, and was a most intelligent woman.<sup>1</sup> It was held to be to their credit that they had never derived any pecuniary benefit from the equivocal position of their eldest daughter. It is not likely that Lord Pembroke showed them any attention. It would be curious to know what were their feelings in the position they found themselves in.

And so the months and years went on,

<sup>1</sup> Evelyn's *Diary*, 15th June, 1675.

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Louise, with all the privileges of a wife, the other beauties with their moments of royal favour, and the neglected Queen in the solitude of her palace, with no pleasure but the gaming table. Basset was her one consolation, and the one attention the King bestowed upon her, was to take her by the hand and lead her to her apartment every evening after her game.<sup>1</sup>

Charles was a courteous and attentive husband, his manner to all women was chivalrous and kind. But he considered that his marital duties were sufficiently fulfilled by such acts of outward respect, and he was too careless to reflect on the lonely and desolate life of the unfortunate princess who had brought him such an ample dowry,<sup>2</sup> and whom he had raised beside him on his throne.

<sup>1</sup> Ruvigny letter to Louis XIV.

<sup>2</sup> It has often been said that Catharine of Braganza had the biggest dowry of any Queen of England, although it was not of paramount importance at the time.

The island of Bombay in the East Indies was her portion,



The only one of her so-called ladies who treated her with consideration and respect was her greatest rival of them all, Louise de Kéroualle.

## CHAPTER XII

### COVERT INSULTS

BUT the Duchess of Portsmouth did not have everything her own way, although the royal smiles showed no signs of abating. Sights and insults which she could ill brook were often her lot. In spite of the coarse licentiousness of the age, and the immorality of the Court, there were yet many high-born people who set themselves strenuously against the evil doings so prevalent around them.

The great ladies with feelings of outraged virtue refused to countenance women whom they considered beyond the pale, even although by doing so they incurred displeasure in high places. A little natural jealousy mingled with these feelings, which is hardly surprising, as it must have been mortifying to be overlooked and passed by for ladies

of easy virtue, or of inferior class simply because of a position which was often considered more of a distinction than a reproach.

The Duchess of Portsmouth, owing to her nationality, stood apart from the rest, but it perhaps caused her to be even more disliked. Once when she had been ailing her physicians recommended her going to Tunbridge Wells to take the waters for her health. She sent down orders to have a house secured and prepared for her reception. Charles preferred Tunbridge Wells to any other watering-place, and the Court always moved there once or twice a year, so that Louise knew the place well. The quaint Pantiles, old world as they are to this day, must have been like a scene in a comic opera when crowded with the smart folk who were taking the waters. Sedan chairs jostled each other in the narrow space, and the motley gathering of beauties and gallants, in their smartest clothes, must have afforded the careless, pleasure-loving King much amusement. Judging by the letters of Honoré Courtin, Seigneur de Chanteraine, who was

on a diplomatic mission in London, and was besides studying the manners and customs there, the English led the fashions at that period.

“Since my stay here,” he writes to Louvois, “I can no longer bear the sight of Paris shoes. There is nothing to equal the footwear of the English ladies. Their shoes fit to perfection, their skirts are short, and their silk stockings irreproachable. Indeed they show their legs freely, but they are beautifully shaped. Green silk stockings are the fashion, with black velvet garters and diamond buckles.”<sup>1</sup> In later days Englishwomen were always accused of a lack of attention to this detail of their toilette, and dainty shoes were a peculiarly Parisian article. The gay Court had probably much to do with this elegance of dress.

On the occasion when the Duchess of Portsmouth went to the Wells, more or less as an invalid, the Court was absent and the place was deserted and tranquil. In fact she went down there as a private individual and not as one of the King’s retinue.

<sup>1</sup> L<sup>ettres</sup> de Courtin à Louvois, November, 1676.

Her annoyance was extreme on her arrival to find that her servants had procured quarters elsewhere, the house she desired being occupied by the Marchioness of Worcester. With much indignation Louise sent a message to Lady Worcester of astonishment that she should have failed in her duty and respect to one of such very superior rank as herself, to which the outraged Marchioness replied, that titles gained through prostitution were never recognised by persons of birth and breeding. She even added some taunts as to the Duchess' former lovers, especially the Comte de Sault. This humiliation being such a public one, hurt Louise cruelly, and Charles was much vexed at the affair, but seemed unwilling or unequal to interfere in the matter.

But sometimes the Duchess brought these slights on herself. Once she sent word to the venerable Duchess of Ormond that she would do her the honour of dining with her. This semi-royal command could not be declined, insolent as it was. The old Duchess had no intention of raising any storm about her ears, but she was more than equal to the occasion.

She sent a polite acceptance of the honour proposed by the Duchess of Portsmouth, but when the latter swept into the stately drawing-room in her usual magnificence of trailing velvet, lace and jewels, it was to find the old Dowager waiting to entertain her in absolute solitude, and Louise knew well that the two fair young grand-daughters, Lady Betty Stanhope and Lady Emily Butler, who lived under the Ormond roof, had been removed from the contaminating presence now beneath it, and the proud beauty had to sit down at the ducal board with its fine display of plate and rich banquet spread before her in company only with her Grace and the venerable lady's chaplain.

It was the delight of society generally to repeat such stories, and Sir John Reresby, courtier though he was, never lost an opportunity either of relating her misdeeds, or retailing gossip about her, although he certainly appears to have been constantly in her society.

Sir John Reresby was a baronet with a fine place, Thrybergh in Derbyshire. He was M.P. for York, so he naturally took a great interest

in the affairs of the nation. It is to his *Memoirs* that we are indebted for much of the information regarding political life of that time at Whitehall.<sup>1</sup>

That he was more or less of a time-server we gather from his writings, but it was the spirit that pervaded those days, where favour was the only road to success, and the smile of the sovereign of paramount importance.

He writes complacently of the all-powerful Duchess that she was a very fine woman, but that did not prevent his passing a scathing opinion of her abroad.

He gave it out that the public had no great love for her, that most thought she was sent to ensnare the King who, as all the world knew, ran readily into such toils.

But nevertheless he went almost daily to the Duchess' room, probably the centre of news and gaiety, and the most certain place to meet the King.

Her splendid rooms at Whitehall were

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs and Travels from 1634 to 1689*, edited from original MSS., first published in 1734 and reprinted in 1813.

thronged with wits and gallants, and all the news of the world, and the scandals and secrets of half the great London world were discussed there.

Among the many other treasures they contained, the King had given some of his best pictures to hang upon her walls. So much has been said of the magnificence of Louise's possessions she must have acquired a fine taste for art treasures, learnt during her stay in Paris probably, it could hardly have been attained in the Chateau de Kéroualle in remote Brittany. Those belonging to her out there must have often rejoiced at having such a powerful friend at Court. Louise never forgot her kith and kin.

Her slightest requests were invariably granted on their behalf, as the letters to France testify.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Le Roy d'Angleterre m'a temoigné que S. M. Louis liu feroit plaiser s'il luy plaissoit de donner la première Abbaye vacante, a une tante de Madame de Portsmouth nommée Dame Suzanne de Pleuc de Timeur religieuse dans l'évêché de Vannes.

"Je crois qu'il sera bon de contenter la Duchesse de



Perhaps the worst point in her character at that period was her pride in her influence over the King, for this caused her to blazon it forth to the world. She could not resist the temptation of letting it be seen who really was the master-mind. She would persuade Charles to break his promises, and the victims of such treachery knew whose inspiration it was. Prosperity was turning her head at last, and she felt that she could bend the King to her will, and through him she continued to make demands which she was sure could not be refused. A request conveyed by Ruvigny to Pomponne was, that the King of England begged the King of France, at the insistence of the Duchess of Portsmouth, that he would be good enough to further the interests of M. de Calloët, a Brittany nobleman. Louis was never pleased at any interference, and his only reply to the request was a silent one. He sent a beautiful pair of earrings to the Duchess. She received them with profound

*Portsmouth touchant cette abbaye.*—Ruvigny à Pomponne, 1675.

respect, and sent a grateful message to His Majesty that she would never forget to render him any service in her power, either by word or deed. She knew well how far she could go. What she really wanted of Louis XIV. was the *Tabouret*, that wonderful privilege that was the cause of more disturbance at the French Court than anything else.<sup>1</sup> She considered that her ducal domain of Aubigny gave her the right to it. She did not, however, like to write direct to the King to obtain this privilege, but determined to make use of M. de Ruvigny, and make her request through a third person, and with a diplomacy amounting to deceit, she set about in a roundabout way to succeed in her desire. She applied to Ruvigny to write to Louis. Whether he believed the Duchess' statement or not, anyway he was willing to be made use of, and wrote the following letter to Louis XIV. :—

“I write to your Majesty at the request of the Duchess of Portsmouth, who is much

<sup>1</sup> The right of ladies of rank to sit in the presence of royalty.



PORTRAIT OF LOUIS XIV

By JEAN LAHAYE

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upset by a blunder on the part of the Marquis Dangeau. She had begged him, Sire, to let you know her extreme desire to serve you, and her wish that you should feel trust in her protestations. Instead of this she learns from Dangeau, that he asked you to grant her the *Tabouret* on her return to France.

“As that return is so unlikely, and at any rate so distant, she never even gives it a thought, and all she wishes is, that you should be assured of her complete devotion. I pressed her greatly to write herself to your Majesty, but she refused owing, she said, to the profound respect she felt towards you her master.”<sup>1</sup>

Louise was quite clever enough to make other people make requests for her, and Louis must have laughed when he got such a letter as the one just quoted. He knew well enough it was at the dictation of the Duchess, who was determined to force him to give her all she wanted, and yet had diplomacy enough

<sup>1</sup> Ruvigny's letter, 15th March, 1676.

not to appear to have moved in the matter. He knew, and she knew, what each could demand of the other, so inextricably were their affairs mingled.

Needless to say she obtained her desire.

## CHAPTER XIII

### DUCHESS MAZARIN

WHEN the Duchess thought that she was now secure from any dangerous rival, news was brought to her that King Charles' old love, the most beautiful woman in Europe, the conquering Duchesse Mazarin, had landed at Torbay.

This news naturally filled Louise with dismay. Ruvigny, who had succeeded Colbert as "secret negotiator," was equally alarmed, and made anxious inquiries as to the intentions of the new arrival and her whereabouts. It was a lackey of the Chevalier de Grammont who had seen her land dressed as a man and accompanied by two women, five men and a little Moor page, who never left her side. She had fled from Holland, and after a tempestuous journey reached England.

Ruvigny promptly wrote this exciting piece of news to Pomponne, and added "Arlington and Montagu, who both hate the Duchess of Portsmouth, would gladly make use of Madame Mazarin to disgrace the former".<sup>1</sup>

The news was exciting for Hortense Mazarin was no mean adversary, and rose as a star on the horizon of Whitehall with singular brilliance. For once Louise's heart began to fail, there was probably no woman whose arrival could cause so much dismay.

Hortense Mancini was the youngest of Cardinal Mazarin's beautiful nieces, and at the age of nineteen she had already laid siege to the susceptible heart of Prince Charles as he was then.

He lived an exile at the Court of St. Germain, and perhaps the ambitious beauty did not think his attentions worth her acceptance. "I began life with every prospect of becoming a queen," she said in some Memoirs, supposed to be from her pen ;

<sup>1</sup> It is incorrect to call her Duchesse de Mazarin. She was very particular about the article being omitted,



“for all knew it was proposed that I should marry the King of England.” Instead she married the son of the Maréchal de la Meilleraye, who was created Duc Mazarin. This man was intelligent, agreeable and clever, but he fell completely into the hands of priests and monks and became a fanatic, only fit for life in a monastery. Everything that was beautiful in art or nature he considered an offence against the Almighty.<sup>1</sup> That such a man should be the husband of Hortense Mancini was a source of incessant amusement at Court. At one time he shut his young wife up in the Convent of “Les Filles de Sainte Marie, de la Rue Sainte Anne”. There she made friends with the Marquise de Courcelles, who was also there as a penitent. The two ladies quarrelled with the nuns, refused to obey the orders, and finally fled to Italy together, both dressed as men.<sup>2</sup> When the Duchesse finally re-

<sup>1</sup>He mutilated statues, destroyed pictures, and had his daughters' front teeth knocked out for fear they should rejoice in their beauty (Saint-Simon).

<sup>2</sup>Saint-Real, t. vi.

turned to France the King took her part, and forced her husband to give her her liberty. Her beauty was famous and entirely due to nature ; she needed none of the aids of artificial embellishments. Her complexion was brilliant, her eyes and her hair black, in wonderful contrast to the milk and roses of her cheeks.

Saint-Real in his *Mémoires* gives the following description of her :—

“ Madame Mazarin is one of those beauties of a Roman type who do not possess merely doll-like charms, or who have to rely on the artifices of the mere coquette. The colour of her eyes have no name, they are neither grey nor blue, nor quite black, neither are they languishing nor yet passionate, but as if she had been born only to love and be loved. Her mouth is not large, nor yet quite small, but all its movements are full of expression.

“ Her complexion is brilliant, but the colouring has no vivid tints. I do not think any one ever had anything to say to her skin being not absolutely white, so charming was the effect. Her hair is black and glossy

but not heavy. The tendrils that cover her forehead, and float with natural grace, seem swelled with pride at adorning so beautiful a head. She never uses any scents.”<sup>1</sup>

This curious account mostly in negatives, certainly describes a very dangerous rival, and no wonder Louise was uneasy at her appearance on the scene.

The Mancini sisters had been the talk of Europe at the time when their uncle the great Cardinal Mazarin was in power, and reigning over the heart of Anne of Austria.

Two of the sisters had laid siege in turn to the susceptible heart of Louis XIV. when he was still a mere boy. He was heartbroken when forcibly taken away from the influence of Marie Mancini. Hortense was a good deal younger, and was still a child at that period. Whether she was the Cardinal's favourite or not he certainly made her his heiress. The Duchesse Mazarin had joined at Aix her sister Marie, who had married the Connétable Colonna. Madame de Grignan, the daughter of Madame de Sévigné, writing

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires Saint-Real*, t. vi., p. 94.

to her mother said that she had seen these two women and that their beauty was divine, and resembled an admirable picture quite faultless. Their sisters, the Comtesse de Soissons, and the Duchesse de Bouillon, who were not nearly so good looking, objected very much to the goings on of their sisters, and declared they were mad women, and ought to be shut up. All sorts of scandalous reports as to their relations with men were set about. In fact they were threatened with a convent if they did not leave Aix.

The Duchesse Mazarin retired to Savoy with a young man called Cæsar Vichard, who insisted on being called l'Abbé de Saint-Real, though he had neither a tonsure nor a cure of souls. He had a brilliant intellect, was madly in love with his protectress, and was by nature so depraved that Louvois, who was a connoisseur in most of the depths of which the human heart is capable, wrote to Courtin on an occasion when he had been obliged to seize the so-called Abbé's letters "that they were, if not the work of a madman, the most infamous

that Italy had ever produced". This was the chronicler of her intimate life, the writer of the *Mémoires Saint-Real*, so the laudatory remarks on the Duchesse's beauty may be taken with a reservation ; but there was no question that she was a lovely and dangerous woman. When she arrived in England she was accompanied by Saint-Real, supposed to be her almoner, and she had chosen London as her place of refuge, determined, if possible, to awaken in the heart of King Charles some of the memories of her youth.

She was then about thirty years of age, and had been married fourteen years, and had four children ; after that she had thrown off the domestic yoke and passed her time, sometimes in unwelcome seclusion in a convent, sometimes careering about the country dressed as a man, spending weeks at a time in the saddle, and giving way to all the passions of which her southern nature was capable. But in spite of her irregular life, she retained all her freshness and good looks.

Her arrival in London caused a sensation.

She was received by the Duke of York at his house with every attention. Nothing was talked of but the charms of this wonderful woman.

Those who were enemies of Louise de K roualle saw in this stranger a possible means by which to effect the overthrow of the former.

All men were loud in her praises, and all women disturbed and jealous at her all-conquering loveliness.<sup>1</sup> Nell Gwynn, who always turned everything into ridicule, at once put on mourning in token of the imminent downfall of the Duchess of Portsmouth, a piece of impertinence that caused much amusement. The Duchess of Cleveland, who was equally disturbed, retired into the country. Nothing but the alliance with France could help Louise

<sup>1</sup> Among the many verses written on the Court beauties was the following :—

“Now through the world fair Mazarine had run  
Bright as her fellow traveller the sun ;  
Hither at length the Roman eagle flies  
As her last triumph of the conquering eyes.”

—WALLER.

at this crisis. She was in hopes of being again a mother, and giving Charles a second child ; but so altered was she by anxiety and alarm that her health gave way, and her pregnancy ended in a premature confinement of a dead child. Even Ruvigny writes compassionately of her weak condition, and inability to rally after her illness. Then for the first time she found that her power over the King was for a time at least greatly diminished. His love was not of the kind to flourish in the face of ill-health, suffering and faded looks, and he was quite satisfied when the Duchess asked leave to retire to Bath now just coming into vogue. We can readily understand that she did not care to repeat a visit to Tunbridge Wells. When she had sufficiently recovered to return home, she sent word to the King from Bath that she would stop at Windsor on her way to town, so as to see him without loss of time. Charles received her politely when she reached the Castle, but made no offer to her to prolong her stay. No apartments had been prepared for her ; and after dining with the King, the poor

tired lady found she was expected to go on her way.

But even if the more intimate relations between herself and the King were subsiding, she still retained a strong hold over him, in spite of the passing attractions of the fair Hortense. That lady wanted money, and Charles, while deploring her difficulties, had no intention of overcoming them himself, indeed he wrote to Louis suggesting he should augment the Duchesse Mazarin's income from 8,000 écus, to 20,000.<sup>1</sup> He gave this pleasing task to Ruvigny, and when Louis refused to see the matter in the same light as his brother sovereign, it was Ruvigny to whom Charles secretly confided a purse containing a thousand jacobus with instructions to give it privately to Hortense Mazarin, for should the Duchess of Portsmouth know of this gift, the consequences would be serious. This does not look as if his passion for the latter was waning. He could not do without her; he needed her

<sup>1</sup> Ruvigny au Roi, 30 Janvier, 1676,



counsels as well as her charming society. She never forgot or allowed him to forget the gallant device he had added to her son's arms, "En la Rose je fleuris," and she made him feel, that through her alone could he succeed and flourish. This strange and beautiful Bretonne had managed not only to raise herself, but to keep her exalted position; and no passing stranger, even such a past mistress in the art of seduction as Hortense Mazarin, could eject her, although all England was practically against her, and her rival was looked upon with favour as a means of her downfall. Foreigner as she also was, she was not esteemed so dangerous as the French mistress, who was considered the curse of the country. Ruvigny, who found himself in the middle of these feminine intrigues, good honest man that he was, did not like his post at all, and was thankful when his master recalled him. Outwardly the ladies received each other with all politeness. The Duchess of Portsmouth would call on the Duchesse Mazarin and invite her to supper.

Once they were seen coming out together hand in hand. To please Charles she gave a grand dinner to Madame Mazarin, and drove her to Court in her own coach. As the latter was said to enjoy much attention from the King, she was disinclined to return to Paris and her exceedingly unpleasant husband; and Louise had the wisdom to accept a presence from which she could not rid herself, and treat the lady with the civilities due to her rank, and shut her eyes to the fact that she had been Charles' old love.

The fair Hortense did not want for new ones, half London was at her feet, the Portuguese ambassador was dying of love for her, the Prince of Monaco divided his admiration between her and the lovely Mrs. Middleton, sister of the notorious Countess of Shrewsbury, and one of the toasts of that day. Courtin, the secret negotiator and indefatigable letter writer, delighted in entertaining Madame Mazarin, and wrote with pride of her sayings and doings: "She spent the whole afternoon playing at shuttlecock in my salon

with Madame de Sussex, who is the inseparable companion of Madame Mazarin";<sup>1</sup> but no one worshipped at her shrine more ardently than St. Evremond. He fell madly in love with her as soon as he beheld her, and from that day never faltered in his allegiance to her. His exile in England was sweetened by her presence, he found in her every charm, and nearly all his writings from then on were dedicated to her, or in her praise. He had longed in his earlier days to return to France, but now the place which held his divinity was enough for him. He lived on into old age, devoted to literature and the worship of the Mazarin, and lived long enough to mourn her untimely death.<sup>2</sup> Such was the power of beauty in those times.

Had Hortense Mazarin really desired to secure King Charles permanently as her lover, so seductive was she that she would have proved a most dangerous rival; but her light

<sup>1</sup> Courtin's letters, November, 1676.

<sup>2</sup> St. Evremond died in September, 1703, and was buried in Westminster Abbey in Poet's Corner, where a fine marble bust was erected to his memory.

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capricious nature prompted her to seek admiration in all quarters, and money and possessions where she could. Meanwhile the King's interest, to the dismay of many, began to revive in the Duchess of Portsmouth. They were seen constantly together in public, and he became very solicitous as to her health and well-being. She gave a great banquet in his honour, with special singers from Paris to perform during the repast. Once more the eyes of all were turned upon Louise. The diplomats exchanged letters on the subject, which was of interest to all Europe. If the French power was not waning, then no passing admiration for the wily Mazarin was of any real moment. The King began frequenting the Duchess' rooms every evening where play was high, and tables set for *ombre* and *bassette*. The courtiers flocked there once more, specially on Sundays, her momentary eclipse was over. Unfortunately Louise met with an accident of some kind which gave her a black eye. Many jokes were made on the subject, and the wits declared that the Duchess no

longer desired to be a blonde, but was anxious to have beautiful black eyes like Madame Mazarin ! Louise could afford to smile at the pleasantry. Was not Charles in the hollow of her hand once more ?

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE DUCHESS' INFLUENCE

WHILE the outside world, and even the inner circle, debated whether or no the King's devotion to the Duchess of Portsmouth was real and lasting, and while Louise down in the depths of her heart had moments of depression if she thought him wavering, she still continued the even tenor of her way, determined that whether Charles still loved her or not, he should continue to find her indispensable.

In her rooms met every day the men who stood at the helm of the vessel of State.

No topic of conversation was ever excluded or set aside. What the King knew she knew, and her knowledge was even greater than his.

Sir John Reresby would not miss a day if he could help in going there, and he it is  
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who has left us a record of the conversations carried on by the ministers and advisers of the Crown, in a perfectly unconstrained manner before the King and his beautiful French mistress. Lord Danby the minister, cast aspersions on Buckingham without reserve, and even those members of the ministry who disliked and dreaded the French favourite, such as Lord Halifax and others, were willing enough to frequent her apartment, and meet the King there in all the ease and freedom of privacy.

While Danby was in power he made a great fight to rescue Charles from the dominion of France. He saw clearly that the net was closing round the easy-going monarch. He discovered to his dismay that Charles had already bound himself, in consideration of a yearly pension from France, to enter into no engagements with other Powers. Such a treaty not only forced England into dependence on France, but freed the King from all parliamentary control. The minister pleaded in vain for delay, but Charles, spurred on by the Duchess of Portsmouth, answered

Danby's expostulations by signing the treaty in his presence.

Lord Danby, finding himself duped by the King, still had the courage to form fresh plans to rescue Charles from his bondage to Louis, and to do this he tried to reconcile the King and the Parliament. But he had to reckon with a foe more subtle and with more power than himself. His arguments, when Charles seemed about to yield to his ardent eloquence, were, as soon as he had left the presence, defeated in the scented boudoir of *La Belle Bretonne*. What man, and one so susceptible as Charles, and a lover besides, could resist those lovely eyes, that enchanting smile. In a few short moments Louise could undo the work of hours and alter the politics of Europe. In despair Danby appealed for help from the other Powers, but fruitlessly. Louis held Charles in the hollow of his hand, thanks to the girl in whom his quick eye and subtle brain had recognised a clever agent, and whom in return he had placed in her exalted position.

It was disquieting news in 1678 that the



French King had taken Ghent and Bruges, and that Ostend was besieged. Charles was advised by his ministers to send 1,600 men of the Guards under the command of the Duke of Monmouth to the scene of action. Such a handful of men could have been of no practical use, and was only another move in the game. The Commons became very anxious, and cast reflections on the King's evil counsellors, and while naming no man plainly pointed to the Duke of York. However, it turned out to have been only a report without foundation. Ghent and Bruges had not been taken, and M. de Ruvigny was coming with offers of peace to the King of England.<sup>1</sup>

The storm now began to fall heavily on Lord Danby who was treasurer. His position hitherto had been unassailable, but few things were passed or granted at Court without his knowledge. His power was paramount, both the Duke of York and the Duchess of Portsmouth were anxious to be on good terms with him. Now he was about to fall from his high estate, and Sir John Reresby, moralising

<sup>1</sup> Reresby's *Memoirs*.

on the situation, remarks : “ Now the meanest subject would scarce change places with him. This confirms me in the opinion that a middle state is ever the best.”

He was impeached before the Upper House in April, 1679, and pleaded the King’s pardon. Both Houses now began to reflect anxiously and pass remarks on the Duchess of Portsmouth, the mighty and all-powerful Danby had fallen before her. Who would go next?

Lord Sunderland, Secretary of State, had the wisdom (as far as his own advantage was concerned) to work with her, and he consequently obtained the ear of the King, and the Duke of York kept in with them also. Lord Halifax was by no means inclined to favour the French mistress, and was therefore detested by this lady, which troubled the King, for he hated quarrels or jarring incidents in his circle. He insisted on their making friends, outwardly at any rate, but their interests were so absolutely opposed it could never be other than concealed, if not open warfare between them.

When Danby was removed from office Sir W. Temple succeeded him, and it was during

his ministry that the famous “Cabal” was formed, so named from the coincidence of the initials of the council—Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley and Lauderdale. Louise favoured the Cabal in spite of her enemy Buckingham forming one of them, and Charles saw with her eyes and heard from her lips alone.

But these measures of the Parliament lasted over many years till Louise’s girlish days were over, and she had learnt to the full the intrigues of Court and State; but before all these things had ripened, many events entered into her life and brought about great changes with them. She still enjoyed the privileges accorded to her youth and beauty, and did not allow the discords of party feeling to mar the harmonies of her life of pleasure. She must have been secretly amused and flattered at the great men who bowed before her, and hung on her words. She smiled seeing Sir John Reresby, who passed many a stricture upon her in his writings, present himself almost daily in her rooms following in the King’s wake. One day he wanted a post for Sir Godfrey

Copley's son, who was an intimate friend of his own. Another day he came in to gather all the information he could, for affairs were discussed pretty freely and openly. Then he would come to supper, and doubtless take a hand at cards. Louise must have liked him, or he would not have been admitted to such intimacy. But what did she care. These men came and went, were in power or out of it. She never gave way an inch or lost any of her semi-royal prerogatives. As long as Charles sought her society, who his companion or ministers were was of small importance to her; she reigned over his heart, and that was enough for her.

## CHAPTER XV

PAUL BARRILLON

BARRILLON had succeeded Courtin in 1677 as French ambassador in London. The latter had broken down through ill-health, which he attributed to the climate, the air being so damp and heavy. In his letters to France he writes: "I owe my life to the King of England, for he advised me to wear flannel vests next my skin. This is a white woolly material made in Wales, and it washes the same as linen. I have never known anything so warm or so healthy."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of this admirable precaution and adoption of a class of garment evidently quite unknown to him before, Courtin continued his lamentations, with the result that another ambassador was sent to relieve him.

Paul Barrillon, Marquis de Branges, was a very able man. He came of a legal family,

<sup>1</sup> Lettres de Courtin, 1676.  
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and his father was the famous President Barrillon. He was also very gifted with charming manners, and was said to be equally able to handle money and manage women. Whether he approved of the Duchess of Portsmouth or not, he was of course constantly thrown into her society, and found, as others had done before him, that through her only could he reach the King. It was an anxious moment for England's foes and friends alike. Scarcely had Barrillon settled himself in the Embassy in London than the first check he encountered was the arrival of William, Prince of Orange. He had been invited over, with a view to his marriage with Princess Mary, eldest daughter of the Duke of York, and heir-presumptive to the Crown. This union would be a political bond with Holland, and ensure a Protestant successor to James. The joy of the people of England was immense; the country rose in one mass, and the land was filled with festivities. Bonfires were lighted in every village and on every hill-top; neither Charles nor James dared show any objection to this patriotic outburst, which was really

a protest against the Church of Rome, and preparations for the marriage were hurried on. Louis XIV. was furious, but Barrillon felt that all resistance would be in vain, and both he and the Duchess of Portsmouth understood the necessity of remaining silent before the popularity evoked by the young Prince from the Netherlands. It was then that the plot to assassinate King Charles, of which Titus Oates was the instigator, filled every one with alarm. Five Roman Catholic peers were sent to the Tower, every Catholic was ordered to leave London. Train-bands were called to arms and patrols paraded the streets. The Court ladies forgot their quarrels in the general alarm. Louise de K  roualle felt that her unpopularity might now bear bitter fruit, and she would be one of the first to receive the blow. She went at once to Audley End where the King was lodging.<sup>1</sup> She foresaw

<sup>1</sup> The Duchesse Mazarin lay on Friday night at Audley End on her return, and "I saw the Duchess of Portsmouth alight at Audleyend out of her coach this evening".—17th October, 1678. Private letter preserved at Ripley Castle. Audley End is said to have been reduced to its present size at the request of Louise.

that he was incapable of defending himself in this crisis, and might be induced to make foolish concessions unless she be allowed to remain beside him to act as his counsellor and guide.

Barrillon, writing to Louis, informed him that the Duchess thought it might be advisable for her to return to France for a time, knowing that she was certain of his protection, and being desirous to do nothing that could injure the King of England.

The Queen, too, was in a state of alarm, but clung to the Duchess of Portsmouth, declaring that as Parliament allowed her to have one lady-in-waiting of her own faith she would not part from the Duchess. Even the French Court musicians had to be sent away, so no wonder that Louise felt her position perilously insecure.

There is no doubt that Charles showed the white feather on this occasion ; the libertine is rarely a man of courage, but the Duchess of Portsmouth did not allow herself to be daunted, and she saw the wisdom of his being



reconciled with Lord Shaftesbury, who was now the preponderating power in the land. It was after the dissolution of the Long Parliament that the ministry of the famous Cabal was formed. Meanwhile Barrillon in the private apartments of the Duchess had secret interviews with Charles, which he afterwards retailed in letters to his own master at Versailles. Louise de K  roualle had not failed Louis, even in the hour of danger. Though Shaftesbury hated her, and the people were ready to turn and rend her, she still held the strings. Her enemies tried to make out that Charles was tired of her, but Barrillon's letters prove that her power over him was as great as ever.

“The King of England tells me, through the Duchess of Portsmouth, that he wished to speak to me in private after every one had retired, and that I should find him in her rooms. He declares that your Majesty can if it pleases you, secure his Crown, and bind him to your interests for the rest of his life. It is no question of mere compliment

between you. Your Majesty is at liberty to decide whether England shall be governed by a republic or a king.”<sup>1</sup>

And again :—

“The King spoke to me privately last night when we met at Madame de Portsmouth, and told me he is determined to take the offer your Majesty has made to him, and to engage not to assemble the Parliament for several years, and then only when your Majesty thinks fit.”<sup>2</sup>

The clever Duchess, having the French ambassador at her orders, now dictated terms herself. Through Barrillon she made an offer to Louis, that if he would pay Charles the sum of four million francs during three years, all the suggestions he (Louis) had made should be carried out. Money was uncommonly necessary for the Duchess herself, and huge sums had been paid over to her, which were entered as “secret services”.<sup>3</sup> Her income

<sup>1</sup> Barrillon au Roi, 6 juillet, 1679.

<sup>2</sup> Barrillon au Roi, 31 août, 1679.

<sup>3</sup> John George Akermann. Moneys received and paid for secret services, as reckoned by the accountant Henry Guy (Camden Society).

was £12,000 a year, with perquisites which made the total amount to nearly £40,000. It was said that in 1681 she actually received £136,000. But her bills show that she spent the money as fast as she obtained it; even over a single night's entertainment a fortune was often disbursed. She ordered a man's dress among other items for a masked ball, the details of which are preserved and the expenses lavish as usual.<sup>1</sup> One story told of her about this period speaks for itself as to the terms she was on with the King, the ten years of their union having by no means broken the intimacy of their relations. When the little Duke of Richmond was nine years old, the King made him a Knight of the Garter. At this period the blue ribbon of the Garter was worn round the neck, with the appendage hanging down in front on the breast.

One day his mother, doubtless as a piece of saucy nonsense, brought her little son into the presence of his father wearing the broad ribbon over his left shoulder, and the

<sup>1</sup> MS. British Museum, fol. 54.

appendage on the right. Charles was highly amused at this piece of audacity, altering, before his face, his own royal insignia, but this new mode took his volatile fancy, and what was begun in jest remained in earnest. It pleased him to order that the ribbon of the Garter should be worn in this fashion for the future, so the Duchess of Portsmouth may therefore be considered, jointly with the famous Countess of Shrewsbury, as responsible for the decoration as seen to-day.

It dates indeed from the reign of Edward III., but these two ladies are the cause, the one for the origin of the order, the other for the manner in which it is now worn.

It was about this time that the King was taken ill at Windsor, and his fever was so severe that the physician feared the worst. Great excitement prevailed all over the country, one party being openly for the Duke of York, another for Monmouth. But a new medicine lately discovered, called "Jesuits' Bark," saved him. It really was quinquina, now called quinine, which had been discovered by some Jesuit fathers as a

sure cure for strong fever. When Charles recovered and was told all the measures that were being taken in the possible event of his death, he cannot have been best pleased, and from that time the Duke of Monmouth incurred his displeasure in several particulars, so much so, that he removed him from his post as Master of the Horse and bestowed it on his little half-brother, the Duke of Richmond.<sup>1</sup>

The Protestant party upheld Monmouth so strongly in spite of his illegitimate birth that a great though smothered indignation possessed them. This was one more honour heaped on the son of the hated Madame Carwell. High and low, this measure was not popular, but the Duchess of Portsmouth rejoiced exceedingly.

<sup>1</sup> Reresby's *Memoirs*, November, 1681.

## CHAPTER XVI

### PARLIAMENT PROROGUED

LOUIS XIV. had now come near realising his dream. He knew well the lack of energy of Charles, and as long as he could excite him against the Parliament, he felt that he could mould him to his will. But when the King prorogued his Parliament, the people in general, not being in the secret of the treaty with Louis, attributed his action entirely to the evil counsels of the De Kéroualle. They declared that knowing the peril she would be in was the reason that she had not advised this measure before. Barrillon wrote to his master that the Duchess was much alarmed, and talked not only of sending away her papist servants but of retiring herself.<sup>1</sup>

But this was *said* of her; in reality she

<sup>1</sup> Henry Sidney, *Diary*, vol. i., p. 217.  
(174)

maintained a serene front, and without much trust in the courage of the King, and none in the good faith of the Duke of York, by her audacity, as her enemies called it, and she had no friends to criticise her conduct with sympathy, she managed to keep Charles in touch with Louis, and under the dominion of the latter.

She manœuvred with dexterity, and having made friends with Sunderland who was in the Council, together they worked to allay the suspicions that she had raised. The Countess of Sunderland was furious. "That damned jade," she wrote, "would sell us for 500 guineas."<sup>1</sup>

The Duchess of Portsmouth appeared to favour the interests of the Prince of Orange. Barrillon grew nervous; he looked upon him as the enemy of France, naturally, as his wife was the Protestant heir to the English throne. Besides, he thought the hatred openly shown to the Duchess would prevent her from being the useful ally to Louis she had been formerly. She was insulted at the theatre by a party

<sup>1</sup> Henry Sidney, *Diary*, January, 1680.

of young men who made scandalous remarks over her relations with Sunderland, and her name was bandied about the taverns.

Louise's desire was to restore the authority of King Charles so long as at the same time she could keep in favour with Louis ; but Barrillon, fearing that she was working underhand, was in a constant state of anxiety. The one person, however, to whom the intrigues and the political parties were wearisome was Charles himself, and he ended by falling in a docile manner once more under Louis' dominion.

As the hatred of the English people towards Louise grew more intense, not content with abusing her publicly, and connecting her name in a scandalous manner with that of Lord Sunderland, they now began to openly show favour to the Duke of Monmouth. His health was drank in the taverns, and although Barrillon, who watched every movement anxiously, knew that too much attention need not be paid to the opinions of the dwellers in low haunts, it yet gave him food for thought.

“The Duke of Monmouth is now the



person of most consideration in the eyes of the people. I think he will have difficulty in obtaining money, though he seems to think that he will be able to procure a good sum, on the pretext that he is working against the Court, and on that pretence it might be placed in his hands to dispose of as he pleases.

“In joining forces with the Duke after this fashion, it would assure being in touch with all his party. Lord Shaftesbury is head of the malcontents; it would be well to make him think France is on his side.” He then goes on to speak of all those who would receive bribes, mentioning them by name. What he desired was, for France to stir up all parties, and thus inflame them one against the other. “Separate the Parliament from the Court, excite the different factions, sow dissension,” these were the orders Barrillon had received from his royal master.

Louis wished to force Charles to prorogue his Parliament indefinitely. He knew how that weak vacillating mind was ready to resort to concessions, and feared a reconciliation, so he urged his secret agents to provoke the

King and the Parliament one against the other.

For once the Duchess of Portsmouth was left out of the schemes ; she was not initiated in this political move. It was the moment when the persecutions were commencing in France against the Protestants.

She thought she was pleasing Louis by working to restore Charles' authority ; instead she found herself stumbling against Barrillon in the dark.

She announced to him that she was wanted in France, and had been sent for to prove the good terms she was on at Versailles, for she still thought it wise to remain on good terms with the ambassador.

The Duchess of Portsmouth was now able to triumph openly. She was no longer obliged to conceal her allegiance to France or the fact that she was the go-between for the two kings. So confident was she in the strength of her position, that she felt she might safely leave Charles for a time. Her one desire for long had been to visit the Court of Versailles in her semi-royal capacity of reigning favourite. She

thirsted to meet Louis, and relate to him in person what she had done to bring about the union of the two countries. She had left France a humble maid-of-honour, without wealth or position, save what she possessed by right of birth, and with a character that had been assailed by the darts of slander. She would return in state with a regal retinue, unbounded wealth, a Duchess in both countries, and above all, as the friend and counsellor and chief support of the King of England.

She and Charles therefore separated by mutual consent in March, 1682. The King went to Newmarket, and the Duchess prepared to embark, not without the precaution of having her pension paid a quarter in advance from the *Moneys for Secret Services*.

She made Barrillon write to Louis to ensure her being granted the *Tabouret* when she went to visit the Queen Marie Therèse. Her enemies made out that the Duchess of Portsmouth was leaving never to return; but strong in her position such rumours did not trouble her.

The Countess of Pembroke was not far

behind her sister in extravagance and display. Henriette strove to mitigate her domestic unhappiness by indulging in reckless expenditure. Bills belonging to the Countess are still extant. One for gloves alone, even in this age of costly dress, seems rather preposterous :—

“Twenty-eight pairs of white transparent gloves, perfumed with orange and amber ; one pair of gloves costing 33 livres trimmed with gold and silver ribbons in little bows. Others trimmed with embroideries. Ribbons studded with tiny diamonds.” These were purchased from the great Paris house Lesgu, and Jacquillon Laurent. She also was desirous of visiting the French capital, where she had never been in her life, and she resolved to accompany her sister to France. They embarked at Greenwich in a yacht, equipped and armed, and bound for some say Dieppe, others Calais, and after a royal progress, reached Paris in safety, where the Duchess of Portsmouth was received at the Court as a sovereign. From then on it was one

long triumph. The great fêtes at St. Cloud were graced by the presence of the beautiful Louise de Kéroualle, the admired and observed of the glittering circle. She sent long accounts to Charles of her reception and of the attentions that were showered on her, and he, through the medium of Barrillon, sent profuse thanks to his brother sovereign for his gracious conduct to Madame de Portsmouth, as she was called in France. "Nothing was ever seen to equal the manner in which she was received," writes St. Simon. "Even by the religious world. Once the Duchess went to the great fête at the Capucines in the Rue St. Honoré, and the monks having learnt of her presence came out in procession and passed before her, bearing the Cross, the Holy Water, and the Incense. It is the manner in which they greet the Queen, and threw her into a strange confusion."<sup>1</sup>

From the Court fêtes she proceeded to inspect her property of Aubigny in Berri, where she was received with all the rights belonging

<sup>1</sup> Barrillon au Roi, 13 avril, 1682:

## 182 SISTERS RETURN TO GUILER

to the seigneur of the territory, but she could not stay there many days, as she was bound to reach the baths of Bourbon in the middle of May, as she had been recommended to take the waters there.<sup>1</sup> Her sister, Lady Pembroke, who shared in Louise's present dignities and honours, also wished to take the waters. There they remained for three weeks, returning to Paris a little before the 16th of June.<sup>2</sup> They were not due at the Court again till the middle of July, and it is conjectured, and is indeed most highly probable, that the sisters visited Brittany and took up their abode at Guiler in the Chateau de Kéroualle. An account of such a visit had it been preserved would have been full of interest, but we may yet picture it. Like a royal lady released for a while from the cares of State, Louise must have welcomed those tranquil days in the home of her childhood, among the green

<sup>1</sup> Bourbonne-les-Bains, Hte. Marne, 300 kil. from Paris.

<sup>2</sup> All these details have been preserved in the correspondence of the Ambassador Preston in the possession of Walter Sneyd, Esq.

pastures and orchards, and along the wild and rocky coast of her beloved Brittany.

After a wearisome journey in heavy coaches over bad roads, or on horseback when the deep ruts prevented vehicular progress, the sisters must have hailed the sight of the tower of the old church of Landerneau, in the far end of Finisterre, with joy. It stands at the head of the great tidal river which opens at this point, flowing between wooded banks and gaining volume and width from the salt waves rolling in from the ocean. Brest, at the mouth of it, was home already, although the sisters must have looked with astonishment at the forts and other naval works which had strangely altered the familiar face of the country. The lands of Recouverance across the harbour, could doubtless then be only reached by boat, but they were their own lands. Every inch of the road must have been well known to them, over the downs, and between the thick oak groves of the forest in the valley, till at last the hamlet of Guiler was reached, and riding through the glades of the

wood, the great ladies with their retinues drew rein before the stone gates of the Chateau de K  roualle, and were joyfully welcomed home at last.

Then refreshed and cheered they must have returned to Paris, to enter upon a fresh round of dissipation, and business too. Louise attended to all financial matters herself. After the fashion of that day, the people about the English Court were in the habit of placing their moneys in funds abroad, and she had savings to dispose of in this manner.

This shows that her great wealth was not entirely scattered in prodigality and gambling, but with a Frenchwoman's thrift she was amassing for the future.

Her triumphs were not only reserved for France, nor did they end there. On her return to London she was received with a consideration she had never had before, the Duke of York, who had often slighted her, now sought her society on every possible occasion. The homage shown her by Louis



XIV. made her an object of paramount importance. She had left Paris with his entire approbation and full confidence, assuring her he would never again have any suspicions regarding her acts, but would rest certain that they were always founded on measures most likely to serve his interest. No wonder a woman, with such a testimony from the King of France, and such a backing as the favour of the *Grand Monarque*, was a power in the land. Who indeed would now be bold enough to flout her who was the intimate friend of two sovereigns.

When Vanbeuninghen, the Dutch ambassador, ventured to propagate scandalous stories about the Duchess of Portsmouth to Barrillon, he found to his cost that he had much exceeded his duties in passing any remarks upon her at all. The Duchess complained at once to Charles, and the Sieur Vanbeuninghen was obliged to come in person and offer her the most abject apologies. Even the Queen stood by her and resented any rudeness shown to Louise.

## 186 QUEEN APPRECIATES LOUISE

After long years she had grown used to her presence, and perhaps appreciated the gentle and kind behaviour of Louise towards herself.

## CHAPTER XVII

### GRAND PRIOR OF FRANCE

A NEPHEW of the Duchesse Mazarin, Philippe de Vendôme, Grand Prior of France, came to London in 1683. He was the son of her sister, Laura Mancini, who married the Duc de Mercoeur, who was second son of the Duc de Vendôme.

He was therefore the grandson of Henri IV. and his beautiful mistress, Gabrielle d'Estrees, and his place at Court was assured, as had been that of his father before him, the Royal bastards taking rank after the Princes of the Blood.

He was a handsome witty debauchee, who used to pride himself on never having gone to bed sober for thirty years.

He was, however, quite young when he

came to England, and was received with much favour by the Duchess of Portsmouth.

The Court was on the *qui vive*, and Charles became extremely jealous. "Great clouds have arisen," writes Barrillon to the King. "King Charles openly shows his annoyance."

The friends of the Duchess became uneasy, and thought she was pushing the matter too far. Lord Sunderland feared great evil might arise from it. Sir John Reresby spread the reports abroad, although probably he was not the only offender, but any way he left the record of the incident to posterity in his writings.

The rumours did not affect Louis XIV. He continued to write letters to Louise in his own hand, and at that time sent M. Tilladet, Captain of the Cent-Suisses, on a mission to King Charles, with special instructions to pay every attention to the Duchess. Lord Sunderland entertained the Grand Prior at dinner, and tried to draw attention from his intimacy with the Duchess.

But nothing would restore the serenity of Charles.

He did not dare to openly reproach the Duchess, for he was more than ever under the yoke of her fascinations, but he vented his wrath on the luckless Grand Prior, and ordered Lord Sunderland to privately prevent him from visiting the Duchess.

This he refrained from doing for five or six days; when he began to renew his visits Charles was furious, sent word that if he was not out of the country within twenty-four hours he would repent it, and called him a liar, a swindler and a thief!

Barrillon tried to persuade the Grand Prior to leave without further scandal, but he refused to listen. His orders were from his own master, Louis XIV., and he gave it as his reason that he could not leave England till he had received his orders to do so.

When Charles sent him more threatening messages, he proposed retiring to the country, but leave the kingdom he would not. Barrillon declared that he had written and received compromising letters from the Duchess, and that she was as anxious as every one else to see him depart.

## 190 KING'S TENDERNESS TO LOUISE

In the end Louis XIV. came to her assistance, and ordered the Duc de Vendôme to write to his brother that he was to return immediately to France. This order he apparently disobeyed, as he repaired to the Hague and remained there till Louis sent him a positive command to return to Versailles, and wrote himself to inform Louise that he had done so, and that she need not fear any further annoyance.

People at that time tried to make out that Charles' love for the Duchess was subsiding, and that her influence was waning. The King's jealousy of the Grand Prior rather proves the contrary, and it was after this episode that he redoubled his attentions towards her.

He even went so far as to kiss her in public, a thing he never did. Doubtless he took this way to deny the allegations that had been made against him.

He also had a medal struck in commemoration—of what it is hard to say !

Bishop Burnet in his history said that he had bought one in a goldsmith's shop.

But after this exhibition of tenderness the King thought better of it, and all the medals were recalled.

During this latter period of his reign, Charles II. received 5,000,000 francs a year from Louis XIV. The receipts were signed by Rochester, brother-in-law of the Duke of York. The latter, Rochester, and the Duchess of Portsmouth were the only persons cognisant of this transaction. Louise was now the chief adviser of the little coterie who ruled the lethargic King of England. When James was occupied in arranging a marriage for his second daughter Anne, he consulted the Duchess of Portsmouth as to whether she thought Prince George of Denmark was a wise choice, and what was Louis XIV.'s opinion on the subject. He also begged her to send a portrait of Princess Anne to Copenhagen. This she did, and received in return a present of the King of Denmark's picture set with large and valuable diamonds ; the crowned heads seemed determined to pay homage to the Duchess whom the King of England

delighted to honour. It was in her rooms at Whitehall that the ambassadors from Morocco were received and entertained. She was surrounded by a bevy of beauties sparkling in diamonds,<sup>1</sup> and among these houris the Eastern envoys were offered refreshments, to the strains of music, and surrounded by the attentions of the Court. Having come from that of a Sultan, such a reception must, though of an astonishing nature to an oriental, have seemed a usual proceeding. From Louis, the Duchess daily received marks of favour and consideration. One day an alarm was raised, the French fleet having arrived in the Channel under the command of the Marquis de Preuilly, without any notice having been sent to the King of England, which was a great want of respect towards him and the nation. It was only to Louise that word had been sent of Louis' intention, and she hastened to Charles to reassure him that it was with no hostile intent, or want of confidence, and

<sup>1</sup> "Cattell of that sort as splendid as jewels and excesse of bravery could make them."—Evelyn's *Diary*.



also to point out to him that it was unwise to show any astonishment at the proceeding, for to the world at large it was prudent to appear always to be acting in concert with Louis, otherwise his enemies would say that the alliance was not a real one. As to Barrillon, he treated her as his colleague, and once, when some matter of importance was under consideration, and she asked him whether his master would not send a special envoy to London, he replied: "You and I are sufficient here to do all that is necessary. Ambassadors do not ask for others to be sent to do their work." But sometimes Barrillon was less complacent, and revolted against her orders and desires. Once Charles sent for Barrillon into his private room, and after having informed him that the two persons he loved best in the world were the Duchess of Portsmouth and her son the Duke of Richmond, he told him that he desired him to write to King Louis and ask him to ensure that the ducal title and estates of d'Aubigny should be secured upon her son Charles Lennox, which had not been yet done.

Seeing the Duchess' hand in this fresh move, Barrillon waxed indignant. "Has she not all the honours of a French Duchess," he said, "without a new mark of favour." However, he need not have raised objections. He was obliged to send on King Charles' request, and Louis granted it at once. "I have given orders," the King replied, "to have the letters patent of the Duchy made out to her and her heirs, and they shall be conveyed to you without loss of time."<sup>1</sup>

Louise had only to ask, and to have. She was, for the moment, the veritable ruler of England, and her power none could gainsay. She fell rather seriously ill about that time, and all affairs were in abeyance, and Charles hardly ever left her room. Instead of lessening her influence it did but increase it.

The much-harassed Barrillon wrote once

<sup>1</sup> Le Roi à Barrillon, 1683. "Louis XIV. signa des lettres de neuralité en faveur de son bien cher, et bien aimé cousin le prince Charles de Lennox, duc de Richmond pour jouir amsi que sa mère des privileges, franchises, et liberté, dont jouissent les gentils hommes de notie royaume."—Enregistrées de Janvier, 1684. *Affaires Etrangères*.

more to his master that the Duchess' illness had caused fresh troubles. One night she was so seriously ill, they thought the end had come, "and in case," he wrote, "I was consulted as to what steps could be taken to put her son the Duke of Richmond in possession of her property, foreigners being unable to inherit property in France".

This was a hint to King Louis not to interfere with the arrangements made with so much care by Courtin, to prevent the lands of d'Aubigny eventually falling into the hands of an Englishman.

But for some reason Louis would not pay any heed to this warning, and he signed letters of naturalisation whereby his beloved cousin, Prince Charles Lennox, Duke of Richmond, should enjoy "the privileges, franchise and liberties that are the rights of the gentlemen of our kingdom".<sup>1</sup> Nothing therefore could be done to prevent him, and Barrillon must have shrugged his shoulders and have thought how useless it was to

<sup>1</sup> Registered, 22nd January, 1685.

## 196 DEATH OF EARL PEMBROKE

interfere where a beautiful and clever woman was concerned.

The death of the Earl of Pembroke in 1683 was a great relief to Louise, as well as to Henriette, who was at last released from her unfortunate union, and considering the life she had led with him, she had no cause for regret.

She thought fit, however, to make a great parade of her state of widowhood, even to sending to Paris for gloves perfumed with violets and hyacinths, in token of mourning, while her garters were of an elaborate style, black with dull silver ornaments. She seemed to have an insatiable love of the most extravagant and unnecessary details of the toilette. To spend money was her delight. She had, however managed, in spite of her extravagance, or perhaps because of it, to amass an extraordinary amount of treasure. After that she had settled her affairs, she determined to leave England. Her child, being a girl, was of no interest to the Pembroke family. The Earl was succeeded by his brother, and the widowed Countess was obliged to remove

herself and her possessions from Wilton. There is no mention made of the little Lady Charlotte, but we may conclude she did not accompany her mother to Paris. Being a ward in Chancery she could not leave the country, and must have remained in all probability in the charge of her aunt. Later in her life, her relative, the all-powerful Duchess, interested herself in her welfare ; but if no mention is made of the daughter, there is an exhaustive inventory of the possessions of the widowed Countess, which proves that she did not leave empty handed. She was obliged to charter several ships to convey her valuables to her native land. In the first of these vessels she sent cases full of rich silks, Indian embroideries, cloth of silver, and bales of Welsh woollen goods which could not be purchased in France ; also boxes of other articles of English manufacture, such as pins and needles, 100 lb. of wax candles and 500 lb. of scented powder. From this one may suppose that these were considered useful articles not to be procured abroad. Another boat was laden with yet more stores of flannel, enormous

quantities of coffee, sugar, chocolate, raisins, pepper, spices, soap and more candles. The list reads as if the supply was needed to furnish a shop, and not for the wants of a private individual. Whether economy was her motive the chronicle does not say. She had, moreover, an enormous quantity of plate. Dozens of basins, trays and plates in solid silver, besides candelabra, dishes, candlesticks. Her bed draped with crimson Genoa velvet, lined with white satin and trimmed with point lace, with a magnificent cabinet, and heaps of fine tapestry, was another consignment. Furniture of a more ordinary nature even to cooking pots, carriages and harness, completed the spoils. Her jewels were also magnificent. She had a pearl necklace worth 20,000 livres, a miniature of King Charles set in diamonds worth 2,000 livres, earrings and pendant, and magnificent toilette set in silver.

The little homely-featured Breton had blossomed out into a very fine lady indeed, and returned to France with a splendour that she had certainly not brought with her

from that country. She had evidently remained always on the most affectionate and sisterly terms with the Duchess, who probably regretted her departure. Doubtless much of the wealth Henriette had amassed had been gifts lavished on her by her sister and by King Charles.

She was evidently not a woman of much character or talent, and cared only for her own pleasures ; otherwise she would have hardly abandoned her only child, but would have sacrificed her own inclinations to bring up her daughter as her rank befitted among her father's people.

All that Henriette wanted, however, was to lead a gay life in Paris. England had no charms for her, which is perhaps not surprising, and for which she cannot be blamed ; but her responsibilities evidently sat lightly on her shoulders, and she departed with every intention of disassociating herself for ever with her husband's country and people.

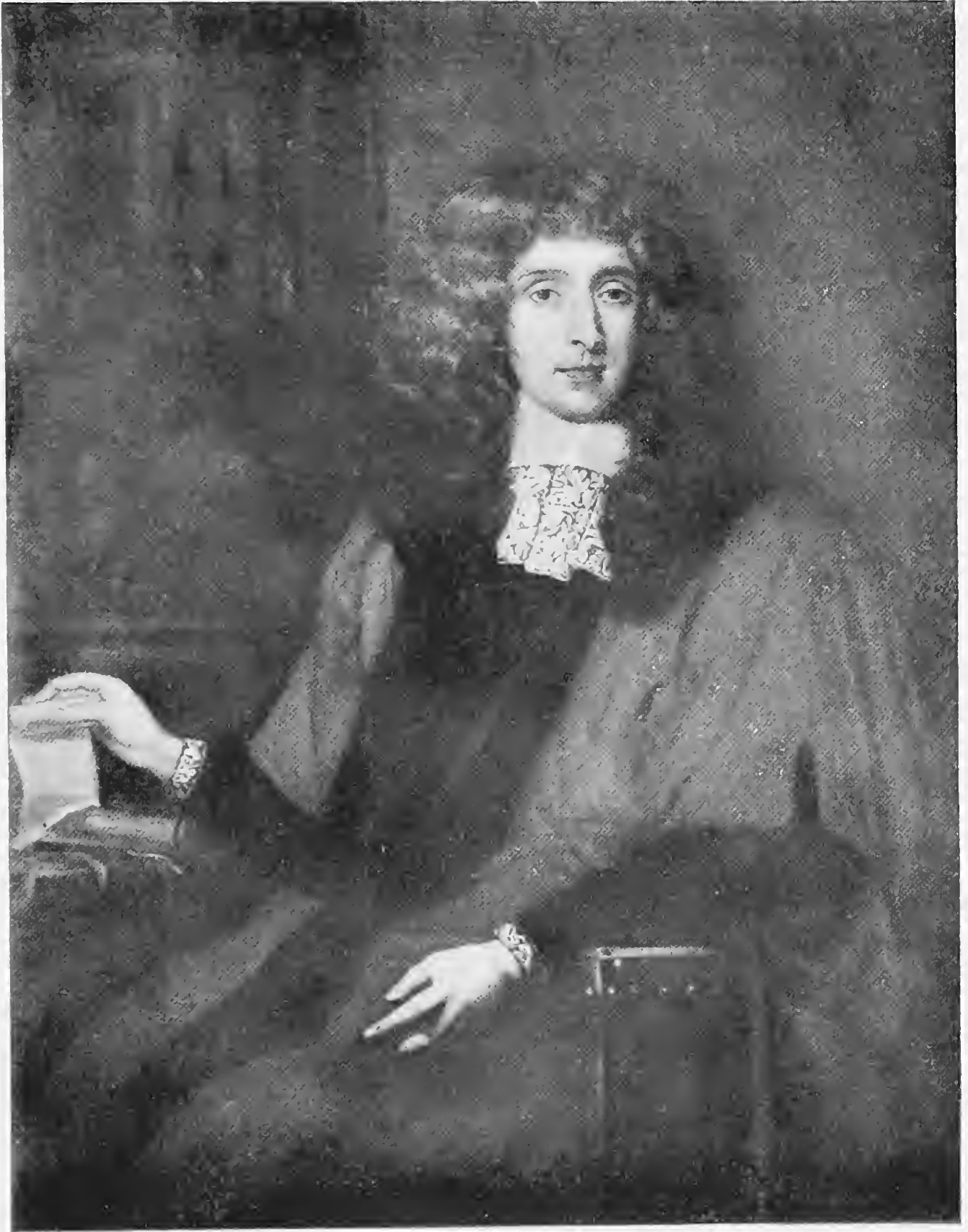
## CHAPTER XVIII

### JUDGE JEFFREYS

ONE of Louise's firm friends was the Chief Justice Lord Jeffreys, whose name has gone down to posterity with loathing, on account of his brutal cruelty at the time of the Monmouth Rebellion. His judicial tour through the Western Counties has been called ever since the "Bloody Circuit".

The man to whom this stigma of atrocious cruelty was in after years no doubt very rightly attached, was a very clever lawyer. He came of an old Denbighshire family, and was born at Acton Park, near Wrexham. He was one of a large family, the fourth son, and he was sent to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1662. It has often been supposed that he was of humble birth, a mere adventurer who had risen to rank and power, but this was far from being the case. He was a student of the





PORTRAIT OF FIRST BARON JEFFREYS

By GODFREY KNELLER

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Inner Temple in the seventeenth century, a merry life for the most part, and his beauty must have been no mean factor in his after-success. He was very handsome, as his portrait testifies, with well-formed features and large eyes. He was called to the Bar in 1668, and in 1671 was elected Common Sergeant of the City of London. Rapid promotion indeed, but his abilities must have been exceptional, as from a letter preserved we learn that he was considered worthy of being employed in very important work.<sup>1</sup>

Being a confidential agent of the Crown, it is easy to understand that he was made welcome at Court, and through Sir Richard Browne, the friend of her parents, he got to know the Duchess of Portsmouth. It was said she had a penchant for witty members of

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Sir Richard Browne, Clerk of the Council :—

“SIR,

“I have caused diligent search to be made from the beginning of 1668 till this time, and you may be assured there is none. Fear not. Keep all things close. Excuse haste, and the rudeness of this address made by

“Your most faithful servant,

“GEORGE JEFFREYS.”

the Bar, for in spite of her still infantile air, she was a shrewd and clever woman.

He may have been an unscrupulous lawyer, he probably was not easily turned from his purpose, but with the curious two-sidedness of most characters, he had shown himself capable of a kind and generous action.

His marriage was a proof of this. Being a poor and struggling lawyer, with little chance of success, in spite of his undoubted talents, he determined to push his way in the world by making a rich marriage, and laid siege to an heiress, who was willing to listen to his suit. Her father, however, had other views for his daughter. When he heard of her secret meetings with the penniless barrister he was furious, and not only forbade him the house, but turned his daughter's companion into the street for having acted as go-between for the lovers.

This girl, whose name was Sarah Neesham, was the daughter of a poor clergyman. She had neither money nor beauty, and found herself alone and adrift in the world.

In a fit of generosity, knowing that by the use they had made of her they had utterly ruined her prospects, Jeffreys married the lowly companion, 22nd May, 1667, at the church of All Hallows, Barking.

Whether the marriage was a happy one or not, the lady lived to enjoy her husband's success, and bore him four sons and two daughters.

The Duchess of Portsmouth had been one of his earliest patrons, and for her he always had a great regard, and in 1672, thanks to the friendship of the Duchess, he was placed on an intimate footing with the agents of the Crown.

The clever Jeffreys was an agreeable variety on the Court gallants. Of course he was at once credited with being the Duchess' lover, but it is believed that their intimacy was purely platonic. If all the politicians and peers said to have obtained her favours had really been her lovers, she must have changed her admirers pretty often, and Jeffreys was only one more name added to the long list that scandal assigned to her. In 1673 Danby was not above

making use of the Duchess' handsome protégé, as his policy greatly rested on a system of bribery and espionage. In 1677 Jeffreys was appointed Solicitor-General to the Duke of York, and received the honour first of knight-hood and then of a peerage. It was thus that he first came under the notice of James. His sprightly talents impressed the rather morose and heavy Duke.

It did not take long for a man of such excellent parts, and favoured as he was, to come prominently before the world, and to be a leading member of society. When it was known that he entertained royalty, the time-servers sought him eagerly. Charles announced one day in August, 1678, that he and the Duchess would do themselves the pleasure of dining with the new knight. By that time he was living in a fine house in Queen Street, Westminster, in good style, or such a command would not have been possible. Sir George was a widower at that period. He received his royal guests with all the honours due to both of them, and the utmost cordiality prevailed,

the Duchess graciously accepting her friend's hospitality. It is said that Charles drank to his host seven times, which the latter returned with every demonstration of devotion. He married again soon after this, Lady Jones, the buxom widow of a Welsh knight.

After the fall of Danby, Jeffreys found means of making himself useful to the Earl of Lauderdale, who was favoured by the Duchess. In 1684, as he was by now Lord Chief Justice, he started on the Western Circuit, and visited for the first time that portion of the country notorious the following year for the Bloody Assizes. On his return, when he appeared at Court, Charles, who was holding an audience surrounded by his courtiers, drew from his own finger a diamond ring, and with many flattering expressions presented it to the Lord Chief Justice in gracious approval of his services.

Those looking on, many possibly with envy in their hearts, can little have thought that this highly favoured individual would die a hunted fugitive in a few short years, execrated by all.

But it was not Louise alone who courted the society of the clever and intelligent. Charles enjoyed their company quite as much in his own way. He delighted in learned foreigners, and among others whom he honoured was a native of Milan, an historian named Leti. One day the King said to him : “ I hear, Leti, that you are writing the history of the Court of England ”.

Leti admitted that he was collecting material for such a work.

“ You must take care,” said Charles, “ lest your words give any offence.”

“ Sire,” replied Leti, “ I will do what I can ; but if a man were as wise as Solomon, he would scarce be able to avoid offending some one.”

“ Why, then,” answered the King, with his usual quickness, “ be as wise as Solomon, and write proverbs not histories ! ”

We have the authority of Lord Keeper Guildford that Charles was better acquainted with the foreign policy of his time than all his ministers put together, and whether drunk or sober, made a point of conversing with



every eminent foreigner who came to England.

Evelyn, who was a well-educated, intelligent gentleman, affirms that King Charles' knowledge if not deep was various and improving. It is well known that in shipbuilding and naval affairs he took the greatest interest.

An Order in Council, 8th May, 1677, displays his solicitude to induce families of consideration to bring up their sons in the Royal Navy, and he was pleased to maintain at his own charge several sons of gentlemen as naval volunteers.

He also loved music and poetry, while theatricals were his passion.

He said one day to Dryden: "If I were a poet, and I think I am poor enough to be a poet, I would write a poem on such and such a subject".

Dryden took the hint, and carried out the King's idea.

Charles is said to have been himself a poet, and if, as Sir John Hawkins affirms, and as Horace Walpole thinks probable, he wrote some verses which are given below, he had

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some claim to merit as a lyric poet. But there is of course no proof of their authorship.<sup>1</sup>

I pass all my hours in a shady old grove,  
But I live not the day when I see not my love.  
I survey every walk, now my Phillis is gone,  
And sigh when I think we were there all alone.  
Oh! then 'tis I think there's no hell  
Like loving too well.

But each shade, and each conscious bower where I find  
Where I once have been happy, and she has been kind,  
When I see the print left of her shape on the green  
And imagine the pleasure may yet come again.  
Oh! then 'tis I think that no joys are above  
The pleasures of love.

While alone to myself I repeat all her charms,  
She I love may be locked in another man's arms,  
She may laugh at my cares, and so false she may be  
To say all the kind things she said before me.  
Oh! then, 'tis oh then that I think there's no hell  
Like loving too well.

But when I consider the truth of her heart—  
Such an innocent person so kind without art,  
I fear I have wronged her, and hope she may be  
So full of true love to be jealous of me.  
Oh! then 'tis I think that no joys are above  
The pleasures of love.

<sup>1</sup> From *England Under the Stuarts*, by J. H. Jesse.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE EXCLUSION BILL

GREAT had been the contest that raged in Parliament while what was called the Exclusion Bill was going on. The Lords first threw it out, and Lord Halifax pressed for limitations, one being that the Duke of York should live 500 miles from England during King Charles' lifetime, but that was not carried. The truth was the leading men thought they were secure of the nation, and of all further elections, as long as popery was in view.

The Duke of York was daily becoming more unpopular. His popish marriage with Mary of Modena had alarmed the country, as it was believed to be the tottering of the national religion. His position, as well as that of the Duchess of Portsmouth, became precarious. The latter, as has been said, played

a little at being in favour of the Monmouth party, and James was advised to retire to Flanders till the storm was over.

This did not please him at all, as if he had to go anywhere abroad he preferred France ; but this was not considered policy for the moment.

The Duke of York being absent, the Protestant party raised a new debate, by the supposed discovery of documents purporting to prove the legitimacy of Monmouth.

Although he had passed all his life as the natural son of King Charles, and his mother, who should according to this have been Queen, was a Welsh girl of no family, the people preferred to see him raised to the position of heir to the throne, rather than see his papist uncle in that position.

During James' absence Monmouth thought he had it all his own way, for his father had always been fond of him ; besides Charles always appeared to side with the person with him at the time. Not that he was really anything like so weak as people made out. Now that the Exclusion Bill was claiming the at-

tention of all, the King was forcibly obliged to declare himself one way or the other.

The Duchess of Portsmouth did not openly side with the House of Commons. Her behaviour at that time was unaccountable, but after-events threw some light on the matter. The courtesy shown to her by James in later times looked as if he had some deep debt of gratitude to acknowledge towards her.

Some thought she was set as a decoy, to keep the party up to the Exclusion Bill. It was rumoured that the Duke wrote her very unpleasant letters, and looked upon her and the Cabal she favoured as being the most dangerous enemies he had.

Her foes tried to tempt her by proposing a clause that the King might declare his own successor, as was done by Henry VIII., in which case there was no reason why her son, the Duke of Richmond, should not be selected. The Duchess was accused of intriguing with the Exclusionists, and it was said at one time she got the King to agree to the Bill, provided she got £800,000. Bishop Burnet mentions this, and his statements are much

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quoted by Macaulay in his brilliant history of England. On the other side there are many who affirm that Burnet was a prejudiced and far from truthful writer.

We can hardly believe that the King would have been capable of such double dealing as to assure the Duke of York that the Duchess apparently favoured the Exclusion party at his express wish as a blind. He openly opposed the Bill, and supported the interests of his brother and heir. His two nieces, who would either or both eventually succeed to the Crown, were both Protestants.

What more could the people want. Charles himself was growing weary of perpetual contests. It was less trouble to give way to all Louis' demands; he had but to listen to the counsels of his beloved Duchess, and put his signature to his cousin's proposals. Whenever the King of France thought his cousin of England was getting restive or masterful, he made some fresh suggestion. He got Charles to agree to the French possessing themselves of Luxembourg, and gave £300,000 for the permission to do so.

The Duchess of Portsmouth valued herself on this, and called it the last service she did to the Court of France, says the Bishop.

One thing was very certain, the King's fondness for Louise did but increase ; he used to caress her in public and bestow on her loving attentions such as he had never shown to any one before. Even her enemies had to reluctantly acknowledge this.

In 1684 Lord Halifax spoke of the disordered state of the King's revenue, and knew that he created ill-feeling towards himself in trying to save his master's money. Lord Rochester, upheld by the Duchess, openly opposed him. One day Halifax told that lady that he did not expect to find many friends on her side of Whitehall.

She retaliated that plenty who professed to be friends of his did find their way there, but she had the grace to blush at his remarks, for she knew she had persistently worked against him.<sup>1</sup>

However, most people found that it did

<sup>1</sup> Reresby's *Memoirs*.

not further their interests to go contrary to the powerful Duchess, and in these later days she met with but few rebuffs and many civilities. The city of York made choice of the little Duke of Richmond for their High Steward, an honour which pleased her mightily, and upon the receipt of the patent for that office which the city presented the young Duke with, in a gold box, her Grace sent the Lord Mayor a letter of thanks in which she told him that the King was well pleased that the second city in England had made such a choice for that office, and assured him and the Corporation of her utmost services. This gracious condescension came as if from a royal lady. Sir John Reresby, who was Member for York, received this politeness as if he thoroughly appreciated it.

“I wrote to Col. Oglethorpe Chief Commissioner of the Master of the Horse,” he writes, “that I desired to acquaint the Duke of Richmond and the Duchess of Portsmouth that I was glad that the place where I had the honour of being concerned had expressed its loyalty by making so good a choice, though



it received a much greater honour than it conferred."

Sir John was not at all above making use of his influence with Louise, and records in his diary, in much the same style as did Evelyn and Pepys in theirs, his hopes and desires, and the means he took for their fulfilment.

"Feb. 22, 1684.—I waited on my Lady Portsmouth (her son, Duke of Richmond and Master of the Horse to the King) to desire she would put the King in mind of a former promise to accept my second son Tamworth as Page of Honour. The boy being then twelve, was handsome and of good parts."

"March 17.—Hearing that the Duchess of Portsmouth had spoken to the King to accept my son as his page, I thanked her for it, and she told me she would present him herself to His Majesty. She invited me the day after to dinner, where His Majesty having already dined before sat with us all the time. The weather was very unseasonable and dirty, and the King advised me to wear stronger shoes, to prevent getting cold, so great was

his goodness and care for those persons about him, however inconsiderable."

That Louise was kind also to those about her this story proves, and the intimacy of the little dinner with Charles sitting familiarly beside them, points to a good deal of friendly intercourse.

So many years had now passed the courtier must have looked upon her as an accustomed fact, and ceased to think of her anomalous position. Sir John Reresby was glad to take his wife to call upon the Duchess, and still more glad when she invited his wife and daughter to dinner, and said kind things to them. This was in May, on the occasion of the Court being at Windsor for the King's birthday, and she further told Sir John, that whenever he had reason to come to Windsor, she desired him "to make her table his own".

One of the King's accomplishments was the art of telling stories, and Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, said he could with pleasure listen to them, although he had heard them perhaps five or six times before, as they were invariably retouched and embellished. Burnet with his

usual malice, observes that the courtiers grew so tired of the King's stories that though he might have commenced them in a crowded room, it was generally nearly empty when he had concluded them. This on the face of it, is obviously untrue, whatever their real feelings may have been.

Rochester said he wondered how a person possessed of such a good memory as Charles should have so bad a one as to forget that he had told the same story already to the same company only the day before. However, others affirm that the King had a large stock of anecdotes, and his talent in relating them was no mean one.

The enemies of Charles have denied to him every sense of rectitude in their sweeping charges of profligacy, indolence and ingratitude, but Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, already quoted, stands up for him. "Surely," he says, "he was inclined to justice, for nothing else would have retained him so fast to the succession of a brother against a son he was so fond of."

"James will not keep the Crown," said

Charles on one occasion, “but at least let him forfeit it by his own ill-conduct. I will not cut him off from the succession.” Which remark shows a good deal of good feeling. He knew that he was often misunderstood. “They think I have a mind for a new wife,” he said at the time of the Popish Plot; “but for all that, I will not see an innocent woman persecuted.”

It was wittily observed by the Duke of Buckingham that “Charles *could* have been a great king if he *would*, and that James *would* have been if he *could*,” which remark really sums up their characters. “Had King Charles but loved business as well as he understood it, he would have been the greatest prince in Europe,” was another saying,<sup>1</sup> showing that his subjects were not without appreciation of his talents.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Richard Bulstrode.

## CHAPTER XX

### LAST ILLNESS OF CHARLES II

AND now the time was drawing near which brought to an abrupt conclusion the brilliant career of the Duchess of Portsmouth. Those about the Court thought that the King was not in good health. He was not old, only fifty-five years of age, but he had become strangely lethargic. He was in the habit when visiting the Duchess to fall asleep for hours in his favourite chair in her room. He was aged before his time from a life of sensuality and self-indulgence. Still no one anticipated that the end would come with the suddenness that it did. He had certainly been troubled with gout all the winter, but that seemed no reason for alarm. He still held his crowded Courts at Whitehall, and would sit surrounded by a bevy of ladies, each vying with the others in the splendour of their dress and jewels.

The gaming tables were set out as usual for basset, and piles of gold glittered under the brilliant lights of a thousand wax candles, while slender fingers eagerly grasped the coins ; and the men betted and gambled, while the strains of the band accompanied the laughter and merriment.

But it was remarked that the King often looked weary and worn, and retired earlier. On Sunday, 1st February, 1685, he seemed ailing, ate very little and came at night to the Duchess of Portsmouth's rooms and asked for some spoon meat. He had an unquiet feverish night, and the following morning, when his physician Dr. King came in to see him, his speech was thick. Lord Peterborough, who was in waiting, said that His Majesty was in a strange humour. While they stood by the bedside the King was seized with a fit.

A great confusion at once prevailed. The rest of the Court physicians and the Duke of York were immediately summoned. The news was spread abroad at once and received with every expression of sorrow in the Metropolis over which a great gloom was cast.

In the sick-room everything was tried in turn, with but little or no satisfactory result. Bleeding, that favourite remedy, was resorted to without loss of time, and blisters applied to his extremities. Emetics, hot irons, even to the opening of the jugular vein, were the rough and drastic surgery deemed fitting to the occasion, but through it all he remained senseless, with his features distorted out of all recognition.

The Palace was in a tumult. The Queen gave loud expressions to her grief. The Bishops hurried to the bedside of the dying monarch, while the frightened attendants rushed helplessly about. Only the Duke of York remained coldly tranquil, sending at once for the ministers and giving instructions as to his own succession. All felt that the King was doomed, and each began to prepare for his or her own future. One person showed very real feeling, and this was the Duchess of Portsmouth. On the second day after the seizure she sent for Barrillon; he found her in her dressing-room, away from her gorgeous saloons and rich decorations, with reddened eyelids

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and disordered dress. “Monsieur,” she exclaimed, as soon as he entered her presence, “I have a great secret to confide in you, but I dare not breathe it to any one else. The King of England at this moment on his dying bed is surrounded by prelates of the Church of this country, but at heart he is a Catholic, and has no comfort in the Protestant faith. No one tells him of his dangerous condition or speaks to him of his God. I cannot with decency enter his room, as the Queen is there most of the time, otherwise he would listen to me. The Duke of York is entirely occupied with his own affairs, and does not trouble himself about his brother’s conscience. Yet go to him, I implore you, he is of the same faith, and beg him at least to save the soul of the King.”<sup>1</sup>

In that supreme hour Louise had no thought save for the man she loved. She had too much good taste to force herself into the Queen’s presence, although she must have

<sup>1</sup> Barrillon’s *Letters*. *Affaires Étrangères*, vol. 154. Extracts from these letters were published by Fox beginning in 1684. See *History of the Reign of James II.*, by Right Hon. C. J. Fox.



known that royal lady would have opposed nothing, but rendered every assistance in this matter which also lay nearest to her heart. Louise knew that he was surrounded by the prelates of the Church.

The Bishops of London, Durham, Ely and Wells were in attendance. One slept by turns in the King's chamber. The Bishop of Bath and Wells had told the King of his danger, and the air of resignation with which the announcement was received encouraged him to read the office for the visitation of the sick. He then asked if he might administer the sacrament. The King took no notice. Bishop Kenn asked again, and Charles answered in a low voice, "there was time enough".

The Bishop prepared the elements, but all he could get from the dying man was, "he would think of it".<sup>1</sup>

All these details filtered through from the sick chamber to the world outside. The French ambassador fully understood the urgency of the case. He needed no second

<sup>1</sup> *History of England*, by Lengard, vol. x.

bidding, but flew to the Duke of York with Louise's message, and rousing him from his indifference, insisted that not a moment should be lost.

Barrillon's persistency won the day. James consented to a Romish priest being brought. Hudleston was selected. He had waited on the King at the Battle of Worcester, and seemed a suitable person to attend his dying bed. Chiffinch<sup>1</sup> was the messenger who conducted the priest secretly into the King's chamber, and James, leading him to the bedside, introduced him to Charles with these words :—

“Sir, this worthy man once saved your life, he now comes to save your soul.”

Charles wished all to leave the room, which was done with the exception of the Earl of Bath, who was Lord of the Bedchamber, and the Earl of Feversham, Captain of the Guard.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A Page of the Back Stair.

<sup>2</sup> Barrillon says the attendants in the room amounted to more than twenty.

Fraser says that there were five Bishops, twenty-five Lords and Privy Councillors, and that in the room sat four

Be that as it may, the company had to retire, and Charles received the last rites and sacraments of the Church of which he had for long been a secret member. If the English Bishops had any idea of what was going on in the sick-room, they were powerless to prevent it. If it was true that they had retired to the antechamber, the presence of two Protestant Peers may have reassured them.

Charles had rallied sufficiently to give his brother all his last instructions ; among other things he very especially recommended Louise and her son to the protection of the Duke of York. Not once but over and over again the dying man spoke of the woman, whom he declared he had always loved, and he loved her to the end.<sup>1</sup>

Yet it is said that he died with the name of Nell Gwynn on his lips !

Within an hour of the death of Charles II. the Duke of York, now James II., visited the doctors, four Lords of the Council, three Lords of the Bed-chamber, one apothecary, one surgeon, besides servants.—*Fraser's History*, p. 584.

<sup>1</sup> Burnet.

## 226 HIS FAULTS AND QUALITIES

Duchess of Portsmouth and assured her of his affection and protection. These offers of friendship were not quite so disinterested as might appear, he knew better than to slight one who could render him that most valuable of services, the renewal of the alliance with Louis XIV.

But whatever the motive that prompted him, it must have been balm to the spirit of Louise sorrowing in the solitude of her room. Her grief was as sincere as it was personal; she had been deeply attached to Charles from the very beginning, and he undoubtedly had the power of endearing himself to those about him, especially to the women he loved.

His had been a complex character, full of engaging qualities and many and grievous faults. His wit was not particularly refined nor elevated, but he was always well-bred. He was an easy generous lover, and an obliging husband though not a faithful one, and a most indulgent father. But this panegyric cannot be carried further when his character is regarded as a sovereign, for he was



PORTRAIT OF CHARLES II

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negligent and careless of the interests of his country.

It was reported of him that he never said a foolish thing and never did a wise one. When he was informed of this saying, he answered laughingly that the matter was easily accounted for, as his discourse was his own, and his actions were the Ministry's!<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt he was a slave to women, and tolerated their caprices and submitted to their intrigues in a way unfitted to his high position, and his example in this respect was most pernicious. With regard to religion, some said he was a Deist, others a hypocrite and a secret Papist.

Both were wrong. Charles never abandoned the beliefs of Christianity, nor was he ever reconciled to the Church of Rome till the eve of his death. Of his pecuniary transactions with the King of France no Englishman can think without shame.

As to his private life, it is impossible to wash out the stain left on his name. His

<sup>1</sup> Hume's *History of England*,

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immorality none can gainsay or excuse. He acknowledged nine illegitimate children.<sup>1</sup>

Whether through friendship, or because he still had further use for her, Louis XIV. hastened to assure the quasi-widowed Duchess of Portsmouth of his continued good feelings towards her, to which she responded with many expressions of gratitude, declaring that his kind message was the first thing that had brought her any consolation since the death of his late lamented Majesty. She had no faith in the new King of England, in spite of James' protestations, which were soon put to the proof, when he removed the Duke of Richmond from his post of Master of the Horse. Louise was a tigress where the rights of her son were interfered with, and she appealed at once to

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Monmouth, son of Lucy Walter.

Countess of Yarmouth, daughter of Lady Shannon.

Duke of Grafton,

Duke of Southampton,

Earl of Northumberland,

Countess of Lichfield,

Duke of St. Albans, son of Nell Gywnn.

Countess of Derwentwater, daughter of Mary Davies.

Duke of Richmond, son of the Duchess of Portsmouth.

} children of the Duchess of  
Cleveland.



Louis, who expressed his surprise at such conduct on the part of James who had faithfully promised his dying brother to look after the interests of his son.

The King knew better than to run counter to the French influence ; Louis held the purse-strings and the Duchess had no idea of letting the matter drop. She would be Louis' friend only as long as he protected her and the boy. She admitted that the Duke of Richmond at the age of thirteen was unfit for the duties this post entailed, but she determined it should be made good to him in some other way.

She made Barrillon write at once to King Louis, which he did without loss of time, the letter being dated 8th March. In it he informed his master that the new King constantly visited the Duchess and seemed on the best of terms with her, and for his part he did not believe that she was really alarmed. She was quite willing to admit that a child of thirteen was not fitted for the post of Master of the Horse. What she was really pressing for, was to have the revenues granted

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to her by the late King securely settled on her by the present monarch ; and for that reason she begged for the support of Louis XIV. all the more as he had granted to her son the great dignity of being a future Peer of France.

Barrillon was not the least taken in by the Duchess' representations, no more was Louis. Both these men knew she was fighting for the rank and wealth, especially the wealth, which was slipping from her grasp. The ambassador concluded his letter by saying, that he thought she would be quite satisfied if Louis would assure her a sum of money, sufficient to pay her debts in England, and buy a house in Paris. Louise really was in desperate straits, ready to temporise in every possible way. She promised that her son should become a member of the Church of Rome, and that she was then engaged in carrying out the necessary steps for that object.

England, moreover, had now become distasteful to her. She who had reigned in a palace had no intention to live as an English lady, with neither position, save her title, nor friends. She knew, none better, that the people

hated her, and if her money affairs could be settled to her satisfaction, she determined to retire to France. She laid claim to some property in Ireland, which she declared had been granted to her by Charles, but she could not substantiate her demand. She hinted that unless her son and herself were amply provided for, she would consider that her services had soon been forgotten and overlooked. By her diplomacy, or James' fears, the matter was finally settled amicably. The Duchess was to be assured an income of 130,000 francs per annum. She had also the moneys she had already invested in France. Her son was granted £5,000 a year, and she had besides her furniture, plate and jewels, and a sum of £10,000 in gold—a large amount in those days—which had been paid her directly after Charles' death, so that she was now a very wealthy woman.

Directly after the first Parliament had assembled, the country was thrown into excitement by the news of the arrival of the Duke of Monmouth from Holland to claim the throne of England, thinking that the

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people would gladly support the late King's Protestant son. The account of that rebellion, and Monmouth's tragic fate, needs no repetition here. It was just before the departure of the Duchess of Portsmouth, and must have still further inflamed the hatred of England for the Papists. A curious rumour, utterly without foundation, was circulated to the effect that the Duke of Monmouth had been executed in effigy only, and that he had in reality been committed to the charge of the Duchess of Portsmouth who conveyed him to France, where he became the famous Iron Mask !

On the Monmouth rebellion and the terrible cruelties inflicted by the Lord Chief Justice Jeffreys it is not necessary to dwell. King James was determined to stamp out the rising at any cost, and he enacted a dreadful vengeance on the seditious people. His choice fell on Jeffreys for the task, who joined to his natural talents a violent temper and a brutal mind. He and the King formed an unfortunate combination at this crisis.

The judicial murders, the outcome of his jurisdiction, have left his name as a by-word

for cruelty, but yet in justice to Jeffreys it may be said that as far as his sentences went, they were only what any other judge would have felt bound to pronounce. He may have acted with great brutality of manner in carrying out his unpleasant duty, in some cases he is said not to have inflicted the full penalties sanctioned by the law.

Three hundred and fifty rebels were hanged by his orders ; but what raised even more indignation was the brutal treatment of women implicated ever so slightly in the rebellion. Age and sex, however, received but little consideration in those days, and in the hands of the law women fared no better than men. But whether Jeffreys acted with unnecessary harshness and greater cruelty than any other of his legal brethren would have done, the fact remains that on him rested the terrible task of quelling the rising in the manner considered right according to the King's orders. No royal favour could ever wipe out the fearful charges brought against the Lord Chief Justice. An outcry was raised in England and it did not easily die out.

Although over two hundred years have passed, popular history still preserves the memory of the atrocious cruelties enacted, and little else has ever been remembered or recorded about the great judge.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Long years after, his grand-daughter, the Countess of Pomfret, when travelling with her children on the Western road in the early portion of the eighteenth century, was hooted, and had stones thrown at her when it became known that she was the grandchild of the infamous judge.

## CHAPTER XXI

### LOUISE RETURNS TO FRANCE

THUS ended the second phase in this romantic and eventful life-story. As far as history is concerned, Louise de K roualle faded from its pages, but nearly fifty years were still before her, and probably some happiness also. Writers affirm that she dissipated her great wealth on many lovers; that she lived in a circle of admirers and hangers-on is tolerably certain. She arrived at Versailles in August, 1685, wealthy, still beautiful, and we may be sure she did not lack for friends.

Louise had looked forward to joining her sister Henriette, to whom she was tenderly attached, and a great disappointment awaited her. The widowed Countess received her with an air of embarrassment, and at first tried to evade the meeting; but when they

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did finally see each other, the Duchess of Portsmouth was dismayed to find that Henriette was on the eve of her confinement, and being forced to do so, admitted having married Timoléon Gouffier, Marquis de Thoïs, some time previously.

This want of sisterly confidence on the part of Henriette cut Louise to the quick. There seems to have been no reason either for the concealment, as the marriage was a suitable one for Lady Pembroke. M. de Thoïs had a fine position, and was Governor of Blois.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Duchess of Portsmouth, during her residence in England, had kept up such close relations with France, she did not at that period seem able to settle down in her native land.

She had left her son behind in the country of her adoption ; her sister, whom she had ever treated with consideration, had failed her ; her business matters claimed her across the Channel, so she restlessly returned to London.

<sup>1</sup> They left four children.



She had always been devoted to her only child, though she seemed to have altogether failed in having any authority over him, nor had he inherited her capabilities. The accounts she received of him were very unsatisfactory.

Reports varied about the Duke of Richmond. As to his personal appearance, he is described as very gentlemanly, with a good figure, handsome and dark complexioned like his father, but with his mother's expression about the mouth and eyes. He has been called a shallow coxcomb,<sup>1</sup> and certainly seems to have had a weak character. He was born and bred in a bad school, but he was good-natured and agreeable. An enemy to business, indolent and extravagant, he inherited some of the faults of his parents.

He had joined the Church of Rome at his mother's entreaties, but now had returned to the Anglican one. In reality he had little if any religion, and had become very dissipated, spending his time in drinking and

<sup>1</sup> Dean Swift.

gambling. His mother had very little influence over him, but, like all mothers, she thought her presence might prove beneficial. Her niece, Lady Charlotte Herbert, was also her charge, whom she could ill leave for a long period. Whatever her reasons, she was desirous of returning again to England.

She had incurred the suspicions of Louis, or rather of his ministers, by leaving France so speedily. Some hidden reason was supposed to have accelerated her movements, and there was a talk of exiling her altogether. Courtin, however, took her part, and declared that such a proceeding would be a stain on the honour of Louis if he allowed such an unjust measure to be carried out, considering the great and important services that the Duchess had rendered him. Matters had gone so far that a letter exiling her had been already written, but Louis agreed to burn this document, and Louise's mind was once more set at rest.

When Lady Charlotte Herbert had reached

a marriageable age, it was the son of her old friend Lord Jeffreys that the Duchess of Portsmouth chose as a suitable husband for her niece.

The wedding took place in July, 1688. John Jeffreys was a brilliant but reckless youth, who quickly dissipated his inheritance.

His father had again caused popular displeasure, as just before the marriage he had given judgment in the Court of Chancery in favour of his daughter-in-law.

At the time of Lord Pembroke's death, Lady Charlotte had been made a ward in Chancery, as she inherited from her father a great estate in Cardiff, and was no inconsiderable heiress. The late Earl's creditors had claimed some of these moneys, and her uncle, Lord Pembroke, strongly objected to Lord Jeffreys having tried the case, under the circumstances, as she was about to become his daughter-in-law, and all the more that he won it for her. But Jeffreys had taken care to procure the best legal advice in London—two common law judges, Powell and Lutwyche.

His decision was twice confirmed, in spite of strenuous efforts on the part of the Pembroke family to upset it.

Rumours of his fall were going about, but he managed to weather the storm yet a little longer. He had moved from his house in Queen Street to one in Westminster overlooking the Park. Here he lived in great state, his domestic life was careless and extravagant, and his second wife spent money freely. But his health had given way, and he suffered agonies from violent attacks of stone. Did he suffer agonies besides at the recollection of the thoughts of what he had made others to endure?

Lord Jeffreys sat for the last time in the Court of Chancery on 8th December, 1688. After the flight of James he knew well the peril he was in. His life and liberty were at once in danger, and he fled disguised to low haunts near the river in the hopes of making good his escape in some vessel going abroad.

It was in an alehouse, the Red Cow, in

Anchor-and-Hope Alley, Wapping, that he was ignominiously discovered and taken prisoner. What he feared was the violence of the populace, and he gladly went to the Tower. There his suffering increased, but he lived on for some months, for he did not die till the 18th of April, 1689. He was buried in the Tower of London, but his body was afterwards laid by his first wife in Aldermansbury Church.<sup>1</sup>

John the eldest son succeeded his father as second Baron. He was not able to run through his wife's fortune, and their position was probably a good one backed as they were by her aunt, though she was no longer the powerful woman she had been. The second Lord Jeffreys died in 1702, leaving no male issue, and the title became extinct; their only daughter, Henriette Louise, named after her Breton grandmother and great-aunt, married

<sup>1</sup> His will was preserved at Somerset House, and contains his only defence. "I George Lord Jeffreys of Wenn, being heartily penitent for my sins, and begging forgiveness for the same, I give and submit my soul to God who gave it, and my body to the grave to be decently and privately buried."

in July, 1720, Thomas, first Earl of Pomfret.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The widowed Lady Jeffreys married Thomas Windsor, created Viscount Windsor. Their eldest son Herbert, second Viscount, married Alice, co-heiress with her brother Sir James Clavering, Bart., and left a daughter. Charlotte the eldest married (1766) first Marquis Bute, and retained the Cardiff estates.

## CHAPTER XXII

### BIRTH OF PRETENDER

THE position of the Duchess of Portsmouth in England was so peculiar that it is not surprising to find that she had many and great annoyances. Although she was under the protection of both Kings, they had other things to think about than the interests of La K roualle, and they probably both thought it was unnecessary and inconvenient to supply all her demands.

Besides, James had ceased to be a king, he was now a fugitive in a foreign land. The child that was born to him and his wife Mary Modena, was openly declared to be a spurious one, brought into the pretended lying-in chamber in a warming-pan.

That the child afterwards grew into a living image of the Stuart race made no difference ; the country wished to believe that James II. was without a male heir, and that in driving  
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## 244 FLIGHT OF MARY OF MODENA

him away they had got rid of a future Roman Catholic king, seeing he had no one to succeed him, save his Protestant daughter and son-in-law, William and Mary of Orange, who reigned in his stead.

His unhappy Queen, with her new-born child, flew for her life, as did many of her co-religionists, as their chapels and private dwellings were being pillaged and burnt.

It was said that the Duchess of Portsmouth was one of the ladies who accompanied her in her flight, but there is no record of this. It is difficult indeed in tracing the lives of persons who lived so many hundred years ago, as the various writers give reports that are unverified and contradictory.

The half-brothers, the Dukes of St. Albans and Richmond, declared their allegiance to the new King of England, so the latter must have found it rather awkward when he had to pay his respects to the royal exiles the following year, when he went to visit his mother in France, and it was reported that the Duchess had expressed herself openly respecting the supposed imposition on the birth of the late



Prince of Wales, and found herself in an uncomfortable position in consequence. But whether these statements are true or not they are not of much moment.<sup>1</sup>

The unhappy King James was wearing away his life in the Palace of St. Germain. That old-world garden, descending in terraces to the river, which serpentine through a lovely and verdant valley, was where the ruined monarch wandered about in a solitude almost as great as that of a monastery. His little Court of English Lords who had followed him into exile, were hardly less dreary than himself.

Sometimes under the auspices of the Grand Veneur M. de la Rochefoucauld he would rouse himself to take part in a hunting party in the forest, and his faithful servants would play "God save the King" in his hearing to the air composed by Lully, and afterwards adapted as a national hymn by the House of Hanover, as were so many of the customs and traditions of the Stuarts.

But life in its full sense was over for James,

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires du Marquis de Dangeau*, vol. i., p. 140.

he had played his game and lost it. He thought that, like his brother, if supported by Louis of France his throne was secure. It has been said that England was little better than a province of France, so deep were her intrigues, so completely did she fulfil the instructions of Louis. If it were so the people had had enough of it, and they revolted. To Louise James was no great loss, although she found it humiliating and unpleasant to apply to the new King William of Orange for her promised pension, an application not well received, for William was rapidly doing away with the sinecures and allowances granted by Charles II., and among others those of the Duchess of Portsmouth.<sup>1</sup>

The young Duke of Richmond went over to France in 1689 to remind Louis of his promised favours, and again to receive the French King's reiterated replies that he had never for a moment suspected him or his mother of any lack of loyalty. This looks singularly like neglect on Louis' part in the matter of pay-

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of Treasury Papers*, July, 1689, published by J. Redington.

ments, otherwise the visit would not have been necessary.

The poor Duchess suddenly found misfortunes crowding upon her. Her supplies in England had been cut short ; news came that her father the Comte de Kéroualle was dying, and a disastrous fire destroyed her apartments at Whitehall, and such of her possessions as were still there.<sup>1</sup>

Some writers affirm that Louise returned to England in 1699, and by that time the Duke of Richmond was married to Lady Anne Brudenell, and was the father of three children, although matrimony does not seem to have greatly steadied his character.

But she clung to her worthless son to the end, and she had always loved her niece Charlotte. Lord Jeffreys was by this time dead, and his widow was re-married to Viscount Windsor, but she and her children remained objects of interest to the Duchess of Portsmouth, especially the eldest, Henriette Louise, daughter of the first marriage.

The only child of an only child, in both

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Simon notes sur Dangeau.

cases the father dying early, and the mother re-marrying, Henriette Lady Pomfret was more fortunate than her mother or grandmother. Her life was a happy and prosperous one. She was Lady of the Bedchamber to Caroline Princess of Wales, and her husband was Master of the Horse when the latter became Queen, a post he is said to have bought of Mrs. Clayton, George II.'s mistress, with a pair of diamond earrings.<sup>1</sup> This caused a great deal of amusement in the gay world, and the old Duchess of Marlborough expressed surprise to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu that Mrs. Clayton should call on her with her bribe in her ear.

“How are people to know where wine is sold,” replied Lady Mary, “if you do not hang out a sign?”

Lady Pomfret's French great-aunt must have been in England (for her last visit) just about the time of her marriage, and the Duchess of Portsmouth, having been so fond of her niece Charlotte, probably took great interest in that niece's eldest child, and her namesake.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Clayton was afterwards made Lady Sundon.

The Duchess lived long enough to have seen some of her great-great-nieces as babies, that is, if they ever went over to Paris, but we do not hear of the Pomfret family going abroad till later. Lord and Lady Pomfret had a large family—one son and six daughters. The eldest, the beautiful Lady Sophia Fermor, married Lord Carteret, afterwards Earl Granville. She was a noted beauty of the day, and probably inherited some of the Breton loveliness of her ancestresses. Lady Charlotte, the second girl, married the Honourable William French, heir to Lord Winchester. Lady Anne married Viscount Cremorne. Lady Juliana, the fourth daughter, married Thomas Penn, son of the great quaker, William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania. The two younger ones, Lady Louise and Lady Harriet, married respectively Sir W. Clayton and Mr. Conyers of Clare Priory, Essex.

So Lady Pomfret had the satisfaction of seeing her fair bevy of girls suitably settled in life. Doubtless she earned the reputation of being a manœuvring, managing mother.

She was described by Horace Walpole as a sort of aristocratic Mrs. Malaprop, making absurd statements with a certain amount of priggishness and bombast. Her sayings are recorded in his letters to Sir Horace Mann, but one must take his remarks with a certain reservation; his sarcastic, somewhat bitter tongue was often a little hard on his generation. He wrote of "the learned luminaries" Lady Pomfret and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu at Florence, describing a masquerade there in 1741: "Of all the extravagant figures commend me to our Countess (Lady Pomfret). She and my Lord trudged in like pilgrims with vast staves in their hands, and she was so heated you would have thought her pilgrimage had been like Pantagruel's voyage to the oracle of the bottle! Lady Sophia was in a Spanish dress, so was Lord Lincoln, not by design as it happened."

This latter was an admirer of Lady Sophia, but she would never listen to him although he was a good match.

Walpole was said to have been in love with Lady Charlotte Fermor, and not being en-

couraged as he desired, he indulged in sarcasm on her mother, and thus relieved his wounded feelings.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was a great friend of the family. Her eldest grandson, the first Marquis of Bute, had married Lady Pomfret's niece, daughter of her half-brother, second Viscount Windsor. Probably it was owing to Lady Mary's taste for living in Italy that her London fine friends followed her there. She was very fond of the Fermor family, and in one of her letters she writes: "I am astonished that Lady Sophia does not condescend to leave some copies of her face for posterity. 'Tis impossible that she cannot command what matches she pleases, when such pugs as Lord Archibald Hamilton's daughter becomes a Peeress."

But the fair Sophia was unlucky in her love affairs, and did not find the matter quite so easy as Lady Mary thought it was. It was a disappointment to her friends when she finally married Earl Granville, an elderly widower with grown-up daughters, who from illness or accident walked with a limp.

Walpole quotes an epigram of the day, not however of his own composition :—

Her beauty like the scripture feast  
To which the invited never came,  
Deprived of its intended guests  
Was given to the old and lame.

Lady Pomfret was more fortunate in her daughters than in her son. The young man was extravagant, and when on the death of his father he succeeded to the family honours he soon brought things to such a pass that to raise the necessary money his mother had to sell some famous statues at their place Easton Newton, which had formerly been in the Arundel collection. But no sooner had she done so than she bitterly regretted having allowed such precious works of art to have fallen into alien hands. She therefore bought them back herself, preferring any sacrifice to their loss, and that they might not run a similar risk again if in her son's hands, she presented them to the University of Oxford, where they are to this day, and a cenotaph was in consequence placed in the college com-



memorating the virtues and accomplishments of the donor.

The Countess of Pomfret was on her way to Easton Newton when she died suddenly at Bath in 1761.

But this is a digression, and all happened long after the death of her great-aunt De Kéroualle.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### COURT OF GEORGE I

THE last visit paid by the Duchess of Portsmouth to England was in 1715. She had tried to return there once before, but on that occasion William had sent word privately that the Duchess of Portsmouth would not be allowed to land. He evidently still considered her dangerous. But now both he and his wife were gone, and Queen Anne had reigned and passed away also, and a new King was on the Throne of England.

She attended the Court of George I., and was presented to the Princess of Wales, afterwards Queen Caroline.

How she came to be so well received in England it is hard to say.

It is related that at this drawing-room there were also present the Countess of Dorchester, mistress of James II., the Countess of Orkney, mistress of William III., and the famous

Duchess of Portsmouth, and that the Countess of Dorchester at sight of her blurted out, “ By Jove ! who would have thought that we three should meet here ”.

Whether this was an annoyance history does not say. Her feelings were probably blunted by this time. She had had her way, and appeared once more at the Court of England even if she had received an insult.

It was her last visit to this country ; she had no more to gain from it, neither friends nor money, and judging by the letters she wrote at this period, that had become the chief object of her life. Her increasing difficulties made it the paramount interest of her life. It may not have been altogether owing to her own extravagances, doubtless her worthless son drained her to the uttermost farthing for the wherewithal to pay his debts.

But although so often in money difficulties, and a suppliant at both Courts, she had by no means ceased to be a great lady. When in France she divided her time between Paris and d’Aubigny, and was always made welcome on terms of equality.

Whenever her creditors pressed her for payment, she was in the habit of appealing to Louis XIV., and such was the influence she retained over him, by reason of her talent and personal magnetism (for there had never been any other feeling between them), he even suspended the course of justice on her behalf. There have been preserved many papers and letters on the subject, and by these we learn that the Courts invariably gave judgment in her favour to the discomfiture of the other parties who clamoured for their rightful dues.

Several letters of the Duchess of Portsmouth, written after her return to France, have been preserved. They mostly consist of piteous appeals to those in authority likely to assist her; they date from 1689 to 1731, and are preserved in the National Archives. Part of one of them to the Comte de Pontchartrain is given in facsimile.

“PARIS, *Oct.* 4, 1692.

“TO THE COMTE DE PONTCHARTRAIN.

“The extreme misery of the inhabitants and peasants round d’Aubigny, my duchy, has caused me, Monsieur, to conjure you to

have pity on the wretched state to which they are reduced, both from the excessive taxes and expense of their necessary tools, as well as by their misfortunes caused by hail, which has ruined them this year, so that being unable to pay they are leaving both the town and the land. That is the reason, Monsieur, that I venture to implore you to have pity on them, and to ask M. de Ceraucor, Intendant of Bourge, if he will exempt them from war service this year and remit some of their taxes, otherwise the entire property will be ruined. Do not refuse me, Monsieur; it is a real act of charity, as the wretchedness is beyond what you can imagine. Forgive my constant importunities, for you have always encouraged me to count on your goodness; therefore, Monsieur, I address myself to you with confidence.

“ L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.”

Most of her letters were written to Desmarets, generally about some private or personal grievance; evidently she had no one to help her.

before we were day after day  
paying dangers and expenses  
we doubt we had money over when  
my mother died. I was in the  
hospital at that time.  
I am still at home.

FACSIMILE OF LETTER.

“ PARIS, 20th March, 1708.

“ A DESMARETS.

“ Being unable to have the honour of seeing you, Monsieur, on account of the weakness that I experience after strong fever and an attack of erysipelas in the head, I take the liberty to write you these lines, to remind you of the promise you made me to speak to M. Nicolle, who behaves towards me these last four months as badly as possible. I have not been able to get a penny from him. He has all my fine Tapestry in his keeping and he uses and spoils it, so I find myself much worse off than I was with Thévening, for at least he paid me regularly every month, and did not use my Tapestry, but took great care of it. I only gave him 8 per cent. and to this man I give 10, and moreover he receives my rents and does not pay me, and if he does not believe that I have a strong protector in you, I shall never get my own. Do not refuse me, Monsieur, I implore you, and let him know that you must be obeyed. I venture to hope that I may receive this essential service from you, Monsieur, and believe me, no one in the

world esteems and honours you as much as I do.

“L. DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

“DE PARIS, *ce 20 Mars*, 1708.

“A DESMARETS.

“Ne pouvant avoyr l’honneur de vous voir, Monsieur, par le grand abattement qui me reste d’une violente fiesvre, et une etresipelle que j’ai eu dans la taite et sur tout le visage, je prant la liberté de vous ecrire sais lignes, pour vous suplier devouloir bien vous resouvenir de la promesse que vous avez eu la bonté de me faire auprès de M. Nicolle, qui anagist le plus mal du monde avec moy, car depuis castre moy je nè pas pus parvenir a tirer un soult de luy pour ma subsistance. Il a ma belle tapisserie dont il se sert et qu’il gaste toute, et je me treve pis que je nettais avec Thévening, car au moins me payès til regullièsrement tout lay moy ; mais tapisserie ne servoient poingt et estet fort soigneusement conservé ; je ne luy donné que huit pour cent, j’endonne dix a icelluy cy, il touche mon revenu, et il ne me payen poingt et me lesse manquer de tout ; enfin s’yl ne luy parest pas que vous macordyé une forte protection, je n’en vienderé jamais about. Ne me la refussé, pas Monsieur, je vous ansupli et donnez vous la penne de luy parller comme lui marquant voullant estre obéys. Josse espérer cet ésantiel servisse de vous, Monsieur, et vous serez persuadé que personne dans le monde ne vous peut estimer et honorer sy parfaitement que moy.

“L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.”

Lettre conservée aux Archives Nationales, Paris, G., 7, 543, Piece originale autographe.



On another occasion she wrote on behalf of her brother-in-law, so evidently her family still considered that she could be of service to them. This letter was written the same year, and was also addressed to Desmarets.<sup>1</sup>

“PARIS, 18th July, 1708.

“A DESMARETS.

“I venture to hope, Monsieur, that the favour that you were kind enough to grant to the Marquis de Thoye, in speaking to M. Volland for him, will not be taken back as in the case of the Marquis de Vallance, who promised to make M. Volland listen to him, within six or seven days. I flatter myself that this will not happen, and that you will have the goodness to continue your protection as Monsieur de Thoye is able to give all the required sureties to M. Volland. Do not therefore refuse me this mark of your kindness and consideration, which I deserve on account of the sentiments of friendship and esteem that I

<sup>1</sup> It is not certain whether “Thoye” as here spelt and “Thois” are the same name. Pronounced they appear to be the same.

have for you, whom I feel to be one of the most honest of men, and full of merit.

“L. DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH.

“Permit me, sir, to venture to beg you, to be good enough to remember my pension that is due since the beginning of last month.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

“DE PARIS, *ce 18 Juillet*, 1708.

“A DESMARETS.

“J’osse espérer, Monsieur, que la grasse que vous avez bien voullu accorder a Monsieur le Marquis de Thoye an parllant au sieur Vollant pour luy ne seras pas retraits par vous comme Monsieur le Marquis de Vallance ce le promest et quil la fait entendre au sieur Volland an luy demandant six ou sept jour pour anployer soit sollicitation auprais de vous Monsieur, quelle noront nulle lieux et que vous orez la bonté de nous continuer vostre protection, Monsieur de Thoye ayant toute lais suretés à donner au sieur Volland. Ne me refusez donc poingt ceste marque de bonté et de consideration que j’osse vous dire, Monsieur, que je meriste pas lais sentiments d’amitiés et destime que jé pour vous comme pour un des plus honneste homme du monde, et qui a le plus de mérite et que j’onnore le plus parfaitement.

“L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.

“Permettey-moy encore, Monsieur, d’osser vous suplier de vous voulloir souvenir de moy pour ma pansion qui est eschue depuis le cosmancement du moy passé.”

Lettre conservée aux Archives Nationales, Paris, G., 7, 543, originale autographe.

The pith of this letter is very certainly in the postscript. It was evident that she was persistent in her demands, which having been granted all her life, she could not understand how they could ever be refused.

It was not only for the settlement of her debts that the Duchess applied to Louis with success, but what was far more curious she got him to sustain her claims against the royal domain itself. On the death of her father she succeeded to the Chateau de Kéroualle and the lands at Guiler, which stretched as far as Brest. A large portion of this estate, now the suburb of Recouverance, had been taken by the Crown, more land being necessary to build arsenals and magazines so as to enlarge and fortify the harbour.

Brest was said to be "*La pensée de Richelieu, et l'œuvre de Louis XIV.*," and yet at the instance of Louise he declared that the Province of Brittany should pay back the full value of the land to the estate of the Comtesse de Kéroualle.

Such a thing had never been done before, and the point was hotly contested, but the

Duchess applied to the Contrôleur-Général, and once more she was supported by the Council. An attempt was then made to pay half the claim, but this was afterwards rejected, and they had finally to pay the whole.

It was at this time that the Duchess caused the ceiling at the Chateau de Kéroualle to be frescoed with pictures on mythological subjects, the faint traces of which still linger on its walls. One of the subjects chosen was that of Andromeda and Perseus, in which the daughter of Cepheus, King of Aethiopia, was chained to a rock at the mercy of a sea dragon, who decimated the country. Here she was found and saved by Perseus who slew the monster. Tradition has it that the features of Andromeda were those of the beautiful Duchess herself.

She had always attended very cleverly to business matters, and had carefully superintended the administration of her affairs, and the documents on this subject show the persistent character with which she pursued every detail of these matters. She had acquired the Seigneurie of du Châtel in the

Pays de Leon as well as the domain of Recouverance, so her possessions in Brittany were considerable, and she received large sums from these lands. How she attained the lands of du Châtel is not clear, except that in ancient days, judging by the motto, they must have been of the same family or clan, but her right must have been undisputed, for they became incorporated in 1681 into the township of Brest.<sup>1</sup> After this financial victory the Duchess of Portsmouth thought she would do well to apply a similar measure to her Duchy of Aubigny, and she got permission to dispose of sinecures on the estate in her capacity of seigneur. She, however, seems to have taken very little trouble to improve the place, and still continued to besiege Desmarets with requests. Ready money was evidently her difficulty, and she tried to raise it in every direction.

<sup>1</sup> In 1681. When Louis XV. added to the town of Brest, an indemnity was granted to the Seigneur du Châtel, as his lands and that of Recouverance had been entirely incorporated into the maritime city of Brest.

Letter of 13th March from Colbert to the Steward Desclouizeaux.

“DAUBIGNI, *27th November, 1720.*

“A DESMARETS.

“I had the honour two months ago to present you, Monsieur, with a petition in which I asked you to order that the sale of my woods in my Duchy D'Aubigny should be put off till next year, in the hopes that I had, that they would fetch a higher price than this year, but having no reply to this petition they executed a council ordering the sale. The woods were therefore sold the 5th of this month, for the sum of 1,800 livres, and having made enquiries myself, I was informed they had fetched their full value, as they are situated nine miles from the river. Nevertheless, Monsieur Thiton, my head steward, having shown me the order that you sent him on the 15th of November, to put off the adjudication, I venture to beg of you to order that the receiver should not be prevented from having the amount as a delay would be very prejudicial to me. And I venture again, Monsieur, to impress on you my painful situation, that is even more rigorous than you can imagine. I am sure that the King, who is

aware of my melancholy condition, as a true friend you would again draw his attention to it, for neither he nor you would raise objections over 10,000 frs. more or less in this affair.

“All the more that having been obliged to refuse one of my requests which he was unable to comply with, he promised that I should always be paid regularly. In God’s name, Monsieur, will you look upon my necessities with a humane and tender heart. I hope for this act of kindness in all justice, being persuaded, Monsieur, that of all the many persons who have declared themselves your friends, there is no one who regards and honours you as much as myself,

“L. DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

“DAUBIGNY, *ce 27th Novembre, 1720.*

“A DESMARETS.

“J’us l’honneur, il y a deux mois de vous faire presanter un pisset, Monsieur, par lequel je demandais qu’il vous plut ordonner que lais vente dais boys de mon duché Daubigny fussent remise a l’année prochaine que j’avais quelle serest porté a un plus hault pris que stannée, et nayant poingt este statue sur ce plassait, lon a exequsté laroit du conseil qui an hordonnait la vente. Lay boys furent vandus le saine du present moy, pour la somme de 1,800 livres, et mestent par moy mame fait informé, lon

But in spite of all her efforts the poor lady never seemed able to get clear of her diffi-

ma raporté a leur caslité cà leur situassion estant esloingné de neuf lieux dais rivière. Cependant comme Monsieur Thiton grand mestre ma voyr lordre que vous luy avez envoyé le quinsse Novambre pour la remise de l'adjudication, josse vous suplier de vouloyr bien luy ordonner quil nanpesche poingt l'adjudicataire de jouir puisque sait une chose conforme et que le ietar me serest très prejudissiable ; josse ancosre, Monsieur, vous conjurer davoir pitié de ma triste situassion qui est plus rigoureuse que vous ne pouvez vous l'imaginer. Je suis très persuadé que le Roy qui nignore pas depuis fort longtems mon malhereux estat, que si vous aviez la bonté de luy ancosre représanter an bon et veritable amie, qui ny luy, ny vous, ne pouvez pas trever auqun desrengement pour dix mille franc de plus ou de moins dans lais afaire.

“ Dautant que sait la seulle grasse et le seul bienfait dont il mest jamais honoré, et mayant fait l'honneur de masurer quand je pris la liberté de luy andemander dautre qu'il ne pouest pas mais qu'il me ferest payer regulliesrement et préféablement. Onon de dieu, Monsieur, veuillez antrer avec un cœur umaing et tandre dans mon rigoureux be-  
soing. Josse espérer ceste marque de vostre amitié et de vostre bonté comme la justisse, Monsieur, destre persuadé que de toute lais personne qui ont toujours fait profession destre de vos amis, il n'y en a auquine qui vous aime et honore aussy parfaitement que moy.

“ L. DUCHESSE DE PORTSMOUTH.”

Archives Nationales, Paris, G., 7, 543, originale autographe.



culties, and whether from inability or indifference, the lands of D'Aubigny were terribly neglected. The chateau was soon out of repair, the chapel in ruins, and the forest in much need of proper care.

It was doubtless a penance to the great lady to live in quiet retirement in the country, counting the cost and retrenching in every direction, after the state which she had held for so many years, and she craved for money that she might live to the end in the manner to which she was accustomed.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### CLOSING YEARS

VOLTAIRE has left a record of the wonderful beauty that survived so many years. “Never did woman,” he writes, “preserve her charms so late in life. At the age of seventy she was still lovely, her figure stately, her face unfaded.” Like Cleopatra, “age could not wither nor custom stale her infinite variety”. In the autumn of her days Louise de Kéroualle had ceased to be dangerous, she was only beautiful and gracious. The King always received her with the utmost consideration, which when her funds were low enhanced her credit. He even went so far as to issue an order to the effect that for the period of one year her creditors were not to approach her; thus with the glamour of other days still hanging around her she could still hold her head high.

Her past history affected no one, and when her mighty protector Louis XIV. had passed away, she found the Regent Philippe Duc d'Orleans willing to extend his protection to her, still in the name "of the great services she had rendered to France".<sup>1</sup>

Her portrait is to be seen as one of a circle of fashionable women in many French engravings of the time. There are five such pictures still extant. In one the Duchess is represented as Venus, her son as Cupid, both protected by a sphinx.

It was held that she had earned the gratitude of the Church of Rome for having brought Charles II. into the true faith, and enabled him to die with the privileges of that Church.

A beautiful portrait of Louise was painted in the guise of a Madonna, holding her child in her arms, for the altar-piece of a convent in France. This singular piece of profanity was not altogether uncommon, and the Duchess

<sup>1</sup> The Regent granted her 8,000 livres in addition to her pension of 12,000 livres in consideration of her important services.—*Memoirs Saint-Simon*, vol. xv., p. 344.

was considered as heaven-sent for the conversion of Charles of England. With such a view of morals as this, it brings forcibly before us that all the disgrace cannot be laid on the woman only. No wonder that she ceased to see her conduct in its true light, and saw herself only as a person with a right to consideration. She had no reason therefore to feel the obloquy of her position. She was one of a family of the Bishopric of Lèon, that was an honour and privilege in itself, and she had been a good Catholic all her life as behoved one who was of Breton origin, and had moreover received the thanks of her Church.

Many beautiful portraits of her have looked out for generations from their massive frames in stately picture galleries. Artists used to beseech the privilege of immortalising the features which had found such favour in the eyes of kings. Of the best known one is at Blenheim, another at Holland House.

Henri Gascar, a French artist, who died at Rome in 1701, painted two pictures of the

Duchess. One represents her with a Portuguese head-dress, the other shows her seated and occupied in defending a bird on her lap from a cupid.<sup>1</sup> Gascar also painted a portrait of the Countess of Pembroke.

The oldest of the likenesses of the Duchess of Portsmouth was a miniature by Cooper taken almost directly after her arrival in England, perhaps even during her first stay in that country.<sup>2</sup>

Gascar's picture is at Hampden Court in King William's bedroom. Mignard, the great French portrait painter of the day, also immortalised the features of the beautiful Duchess, and his picture is at Kensington Palace.

The portrait of Charles II. and the Duchess painted together, representing Cymon and Iphigenia, is mentioned by Horace Walpole as being lost or missing from the royal collection. A copy, or possibly the original, is in the possession of Sir Gerard Noel. It is the only picture in profile. One of the best known is the

<sup>1</sup> This was engraved by Stanislas Baudet.

<sup>2</sup> Some writers affirm that Cooper died in 1670.

## 274 DUKE OF RICHMOND'S DEATH

“Arcadian Bergère,” by Sir Peter Lely, now at Althorpe.

The death of her son, the Duke of Richmond, in 1723 was doubtless a pang to his mother, depraved as his life had been, and with his untimely end her last tie with England was broken. Paris was more her home, and as long as the Marquise de Thois was alive, Louise took up her abode mostly there.

The tie between the sisters had always been a close one, and lasted to the end.

The Marquise de Thois had a fine hotel in the Rue de Varennes, that in which the Duchess of Portsmouth lived was the Rue des Sept-Saints, but such of her letters as have been preserved are simply dated from Paris.

Henriette had become almost an invalid in her latter years, and on the 12th of May, 1725, two years after the death of her nephew, feeling her end approaching she dictated her will. For some reason the description of the surroundings of the Marquise in her last days has been preserved. No longer able to move

about she inhabited a room on the ground floor in her fine house. She spent her time lying on a couch by the open door that led into the garden. Her family were gathered round her, and there she expired peacefully twelve days after she had set her affairs in order, and Louise was now left alone and solitary.

We have no record of how she met her death. She survived Henriette nine years. Although she now mainly lived at Aubigny, she does not appear to have used her French title. All her letters from Aubigny, the last, to the Controller-General of Finance, still on the subject of her money, dated 1731, are signed L. Duchesse de Portsmouth.<sup>2</sup>

She lived in the retirement during these last years which befitted her advancing age. She remained a memory only at the Courts, of which she had been such a brilliant ornament and such a powerful factor. Alone and deserted

<sup>1</sup> *Mercure de France*, November, 1734.

<sup>2</sup> Philibert Orry was Contrôleur-général 1730 to 1745. In the collection of M. de Barberey.

by the great world, what can have been her thoughts or feelings? Not regret or remorse, of that we may feel certain. Triumphant rather, that she had lived her life every moment, carried out her mission, and raised herself to the pinnacle of her fame. There had been no failure throughout her career from her point of view, and there had been much happiness. Finer feelings of repentance and regret found little place in the age and circle in which she moved. Her last years were not altogether wasted. She founded a convent on her property; the order of nuns divided their time between the instruction of the young and the care of the sick. She also richly decorated several churches: thus she ended her days in the odour of sanctity. In October, 1734, she came up to Paris to consult her physicians, and while there she died, 14th November, at the age of eighty-five.

She was laid to rest in the Church of Les Carmes de Chaussés in the sepulchre belonging to the family of De Rieux, where her dust could mingle with that of her illustrious



ancestors of that name, whose descendants saw no reason why the once famous Louise de Kéroualle should not sleep in their midst.

“Autre temps, autre mœurs.”

FINIS



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